

Thesis

(National) cuisine as a ground for intercultural encounters: The case of the Greek cookbook

Η (εθνική) κουζίνα ως πεδίο διαπολιτισμικών συναντήσεων

Η περίπτωση της ελληνικής κουζίνας σε βιβλία μαγειρικής

Sokratis Lazidis



Volos, 2025

Evaluation committee

«Υπεύθυνη Δήλωση

Βεβαιώνω ότι είμαι συγγραφέας αυτής της Πτυχιακής εργασίας και ότι κάθε βοήθεια που προσφέρθηκε στη συγγραφή της αναγνωρίζεται και αναφέρεται στο κείμενο. Επιπλέον, αναφέρονται όλες οι βιβλιογραφικές πηγές που αξιοποιήθηκαν, πρωτογενείς και δευτερογενείς, είτε η συμβολή τους παρατίθεται επακριβώς ως απόσπασμα είτε ως παράφραση».

Supervising Professor
Kantzia Emmanouela
Examination Committee
Anastasaki Elena & Kiosses Spyridon

Abstract

This paper aims to explore the ways in which culture is represented through cookbooks. Cookbooks can be much more than manuals; they often hold literary and cultural value. In the field of intercultural studies, the cookbook can be a valuable tool in examining the mechanisms of identity reproduction and culture dissemination on the world stage. In recent years, there has been a rising interest in approaching cookery books as cultural artifacts. In this study, I examine three cookbooks about Greek food written in English, one targeted specifically to an audience of tourists, one by a celebrity chef of the diaspora, and one that adopts a unique anthropological approach. I highlight the differing versions of Greekness each one showcases, focusing particularly on the themes of authenticity, heritage, transliteration and nation branding, while also discussing them in the context of Orientalist, intercultural and feminist discourse practices. I do so through discourse analysis, paying particular attention to the visual elements in the texts, the narratives that introduce and accompany the recipes that are found therein, as well as the authors' linguistic strategies including translation and transliteration. This combines tools from post-colonial, cultural, intercultural and food studies, while taking a new comparative approach to studying Greek culinary culture in the cookbook genre.

Περίληψη

Η εργασία έχει ως στόχο να διερευνήσει τους τρόπους με τους οποίους η κουλτούρα εκφράζεται μέσω των βιβλίων μαγειρικής. Τα βιβλία μαγειρικής αποδεικνύονται συχνά κάτι πολύ περισσότερο από απλά εγχειρίδια· έχουν λογοτεχνική και πολιτιστική αξία. Στον χώρο των διαπολιτισμικών σπουδών, τα βιβλία μαγειρικής μπορούν να αποτελέσουν ένα πολύτιμο εργαλείο για την εξέταση των μηχανισμών αναπαραγωγής της ταυτότητας και διάδοσης της κουλτούρας στην παγκόσμια σκηνή. Τα τελευταία χρόνια, έχει αυξηθεί το ενδιαφέρον για την προσέγγιση των βιβλίων μαγειρικής ως πολιτιστικών αντικειμένων. Στη μελέτη αυτή, εξετάζω τρία βιβλία μαγειρικής για την ελληνική κουζίνα γραμμένα στα αγγλικά, ένα για τουρίστες, ένα από διάσημη σεφ της διασποράς και ένα που υιοθετεί μια ιδιαίτερη μια μοναδική ανθρωπολογική προσέγγιση στη γαστρονομία. Επισημαίνω τις διαφορετικές εκδοχές της ελληνικότητας που παρουσιάζει το καθένα, εστιάζοντας ιδιαίτερα στα θέματα της αυθεντικότητας, της κληρονομιάς, της γλώσσας μεταγραφής και της προώθησης της εικόνας της χώρας, ενώ παράλληλα συζητώ τις στρατηγικές των συγγραφέων στο πλαίσιο των λογοθετικών πρακτικών του οριενταλισμού, της διαπολιτισμικότητας και του φεμινισμού. Το κάνω αυτό μέσω της ανάλυσης του λόγου, δίνοντας ιδιαίτερη προσοχή στα οπτικά στοιχεία των κειμένων, στις αφηγήσεις που εισάγουν και συνοδεύουν τις συνταγές που περιλαμβάνονται σε αυτά, καθώς και στις γλωσσικές στρατηγικές των συγγραφέων, συμπεριλαμβανομένης της μετάφρασης και της μεταγραφής. Η διατριβή αυτή συνδυάζει εργαλεία από τις μετα-αποικιακές, πολιτισμικές και διαπολιτισμικές σπουδές, καθώς και τις σπουδές φαγητού, υιοθετώντας μια νέα συγκριτική προσέγγιση στη μελέτη της ελληνικής γαστρονομικής κουλτούρας στο είδος των βιβλίων μαγειρικής.

Table of Contents

Introduction

My Greek Taverna

1. The taverna is open for business, get a table!.....	10
2. Genre and Aesthetics.....	10
3. Picture perfect.....	12
4. Greece, food tourism and national branding.....	13
5. Authenticity sells.....	14
6. Orientalism.....	16
7. A close reading on Coffee.....	17

My Greek Table

1. The culinary ambassador.....	19
2. Variations to a pattern: aesthetics and national branding.....	20
3. Photographs; a collage of food and life.....	22
4. Authenticity and Innovation.....	23
5. Fusion cooking and diasporic identity.....	24
6. Food wars and real ones.....	25
7. Not ‘Greek enough’? Too ‘Oriental’? Slather it in bechamel!.....	27
8. Transliteration and italic – or how to pronounce ‘gigantes’.....	29

Yiayia

1. Who is Miari and who is Yiayia?.....	32
2. Yiayia; plural: yiayiades.....	32
3. The Exterior: a discussion of aesthetics and national branding.....	34
4. Establishing the myth of the Yiayia.....	36
5. A feminist view of the Yiayia.....	36
6. Seasonality, locality and authenticity.....	37
7. Transliteration and author identity.....	38
8. Rusticity and representation: examining Miari’s new Greek Image.....	39
9. When in Greece, eat as the Romans do!.....	40
10. Drinking coffee together on the border.....	42

Comparative Analysis.....	46
---------------------------	----

Conclusions.....	49
------------------	----

Bibliography.....	52
-------------------	----

Introduction

To cook can be a mundane activity, especially if it has to happen every day. Some can derive satisfaction and joy from it, but to cook, or rather to eat, is a requirement for our survival, and we as human beings hate being told what to do as much as we hate the idea of *having* to do something. Cookbooks, in turn, are used like manuals to aid in the undertaking of this daily task or to add variety to it. Depending on their nature, they might also provide information on the history of cooking traditions or specific dishes, introduce cooking techniques and trace them to an original cultural context, use visual illustrations or photographs both for practical purposes and in order to make them more appealing. In this respect, cookbooks can be seen as market products with various functions and different target audiences.

At the same time, however, and from the perspective of social science, cookbooks can also be viewed as artifacts that aid in the decoding of culture and society. After all, cookbooks are archives of knowledge gathered across several generations and put into writing, with insights into the times they were written. Often describing the ways people lived and what they had access to, as well as their traditions and the minutiae of daily life. In this thesis, cookbooks are treated as “cultural snapshots”, in other words, used as case studies to examine the ways in which Greek culture, and culture in general, is depicted through food, language, photography, and storytelling. Additionally, as they involve an “ethnic cuisine”, and as both their creators and their audiences are not limited to a local or national community, they are used to study how culture travels across time and space. In a more particular sense, then, I study how cookbook contributors (writers, photographers, and editors) act as mediators among cultures.

Works on cultural theory and criticism are plentiful and easy to find, many of which have been of great importance in this study, but relatively few focus on cookbooks as a tool to aid in our understanding of culture. One theorist who has treated food in this respect is Roland Barthes, specifically in his work *Mythologies* (1957). Barthes notes that, like many other aspects of daily life, food had become a myth in people’s consciousness. He explains that myth is a type of speech or language in that it acts as a mode and a form of signification. He thus introduces the idea that food can become a type of modern mythology if conveyed by discourse; moreover, since food can be mythologized and myth is a language, semiology can be used to break it down. In cookbooks, the language and, particularly, the type of discourse used is unique in many ways; it can be prescriptive or descriptive, narrative, and/or confessional. The tone and style range accordingly from gentle to authoritative. The type of discourse chosen is also related to an attempt to convey identity and personality. In the three books of this study in particular (*My Greek Taverna*, *My Greek Table*, and *Yiyia*), the authors play with language and use it as a tool to depict their own Greek (or hybrid) identity for the audience. In addition to diction, translation and presentation can also be important: the use of transliteration and/or italicization is common in all three. Translation is also selective when it comes to the names of foods and ingredients. The choice might depend on their popularity among English-speaking readers, but it might also depend on other considerations related to authorial strategies. Much like wine or steak in France, Greek food has also become a sort of myth

as an ‘Ethnic Cuisine’, and the cookbook authors often choose to exoticize dishes (along with Greekness).

To go back to Barthes, if food is examined as a myth and if myth is a form of language, then this allows the concept of a ‘Food Voice’ to form. Barthes mentions that “*Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message*” (Barthes 109). Similarly, cultural anthropologist Lucy M. Long, who has explored the relationship of food with culture and tourism, explains that:

Food speaks. It tells of memories, relationships, cultural histories, and personal life stories. It reflects not only who we are, but also who we were in the past and who we want to be [...] These meanings are fluid, changing over time and with circumstances, and being shaped by the settings and social dynamics in which we express them (Long 119).

The two theorists seem to agree here, creating a complex narrative of food in which it shapes and is also shaped by culture in a tug of war. Cookbooks in particular become the ground for such a ‘battle’, being the written testimony of food as it is being shaped by culture and then shaping it in turn. A typical example in this respect is Julia Child, whose cookbooks were incredibly influential in American kitchens, mediating French cuisine for an American audience and adjusting it to their preferences. Yet another one is Greek chef and cookbook author Nikolaos Tselementes, whose last name became a synonym for the entire genre. Much like Child, Tselementes was hugely influential to Greek gastronomy. Many aspects that he introduced, such as bechamel, are now considered traditional staples. However, contemporary scholars who have studied his work have made the case for a narrative riddled with sexism, racism, and orientalism. For instance, Tselementes argued that Greeks should limit their use of spices, implementing the French garnishing to conceal and glaze the aspects he considered far too ‘oriental’ for Greece and undermining its image as the cradle of European civilization (Grigoriadou 42 – 43).

Attempting a reading of cookbooks through an inter-cultural (if not a post-colonial) perspective, I also draw upon the writings of Edward W. Said, who treated the subject of “othering” at length in *Orientalism* (1979). Said stated that Orientalism (a term used to refer to the ways in which the Western world has tried to construct the image of the East) can be manifested in different areas and can acquire different forms, holding within it many definitions, all of which are interdependent. A definition provided by Said describes that “*The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences*” (Said 1 – 2). Though the roots of Orientalism could be traced back to the antiquity of ancient Greece, modern Greece has often (and especially during the period of the Ottoman Occupation) been viewed as part of the ‘Orient’ as imagined by the Western mind. Much like the nations of the Middle East, North Africa, and beyond, there is a long tradition of European pilgrims, explorers, and travelers visiting Greece and constructing an image of the country much influenced by stereotypes and preconceptions. A characteristic tendency shared by some of the travelers was that of looking for the monuments and ruins of a revered ancient civilization, while depicting its contemporary inhabitants as having regressed to a state of barbarism.

But what is more interesting for our purposes are the orientalist tendencies associated with the tourism industry of modern-day Greece. Though the roots of orientalism could be traced back to the

antiquity of ancient Greece, modern Greece has often (and especially during the period of the Ottoman Occupation) been viewed as part of the ‘Orient’ as imagined by the Western mind. In regard to the relationship between Greece, of the last few centuries and of now, and the ‘Orient’ as imagined in the minds of the West, Vassiliki Kolocotroni and Efterpi Mitsi describe that as a nation, a culture, and a place, it finds itself in an ambiguous third space. Situated at the threshold between past and present, East and West, where Europe and its conception of the ‘Orient’ intertwine and blur. They also explain that Greece is torn between the idealized ancient era and its modern palimpsest (Mitsi, Kolocotroni, 5).

Moreover, the rise of the tourism industry has resulted, at least in some part, to self-exoticization being used as a tactic to appeal to a non-Greek Western audience. The authors we will examine often capitalize on a notion of romanticism connected with the image of the ‘exotic’ or ‘oriental’ in the Western mind, which is also found in cookbooks, where self-exoticization and Orientalism are used in text, image, and presentation. In this respect, the local often acquires a dimension of the exotic for marketing purposes. Orientalism occurs recurrently and in unexpected ways in the texts we will examine, even if their authors do not proclaim Greece to be part of the ‘Orient’.

Another foundational text for this study was *Arts of the Contact Zone* by Mary Louise Pratt. The concept of the contact zones has allowed for the examination of cookbooks, not only as a product depicting culture, but as objects that affect it. The contact zones, as coined by Pratt, are:

social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today. (Pratt 34)

A case is made here that cultural cookbooks, like the ones being examined in this paper, are in themselves a portable contact zone. An item that allows foreign readers to engage with Greek culture anywhere and at any time. Additionally, mentions and discussions of contact zones can be found across all three books, where Greekness converges with other cultures, in the taverna, on the Greco-Turkish border, in Greek restaurants in New York, and more. Pratt’s theory is the key to understanding the nuances of foods that have become shared cultural heritage for many nations, modern borders notwithstanding. Additionally, the concept of the contact zones allows for discussions of the culinary fluidity and fusion cooking that develops through the Greek diaspora.

Similarly to Pratt’s contact zones, Homi K. Bhabha’s introduction of the third spaces and of the hybridity of culture in his work *The Location of Culture* (1994) is also an invaluable theoretical tool for the present paper. The cookbooks, through their approach to express, or as Bhabha puts it, enunciate Greek culture, try to bypass (or at times underline) the “*différance*” (Bhabha 34) of writing through the use of cultural transfers. In addition, each of these three books establishes a third space in which the reader is immersed in Greek culture through language, photography, and storytelling. Then, in turn, it urges the reader to further engage with this culture by cooking and consuming its physical manifestation, its food. Following Bhabha’s logic, when cooking and eating these culturally Other foods, the kitchen (and indeed the cookbook itself) is transformed into a third space, where culture is performed. Registering recipes and cooking both involve a function of mimicry, which leads to the hybridization of culture and a problematization of the notion of ‘authenticity’. This process is made evident to a greater or lesser extent in all three cookbooks,

where many of the recipes do not adhere to traditional ways of preparation, adjusting ingredients, measurements, and incorporating foreign or modernized elements.

This paper examines three cookbooks with distinct characters and discusses the components that combine to create the means of cultural representation in each one. First, I examine *My Greek Taverna*, a tourist product that adheres to the tourist industry's modus operandi for advertising the country as the ideal vacation paradise, representing Greece through the taverna as a delicious retreat for the sun and sand traveler. Following that is the book *My Greek Table*, which is similar in name but very different in content compared to the first. This cookbook is the product of Diane Kochilas, a celebrity chef who is renowned for being the face of Greek cuisine to her primarily American audience. In this book, Kochilas's diasporic identity comes heavily into play both in her cooking and her view of Greece. The last of the three books, and the most recent, is Anastasia Miari's *Yiayia*. In this project, the half-Greek, half-British London-Athens-based journalist and writer travels the country to create an anthology of recipes and anecdotes from Greece's grandmothers. *Yiayia* is a folk and community cookbook that breaches the confines of the genre by diving into the field of anthropology. It is a book rich with oral accounts regarding Greek history, culture, and society, characterized deeply by Miari's hybrid identity. Following the discussions of these three books, I will explore them comparatively in an attempt to understand the ways each one approaches subjects like authenticity, national branding, identity and heritage. I focus particularly on the creators' visual and narrative strategies, while also exploring the orientalist, intercultural and feminist politics at stake. I do so through discourse analysis, paying particular attention to the photography and other elements that are used to enhance national branding, the narratives that introduce and accompany the recipes presented, as well as the authors' linguistic strategies including translation and transliteration.

Lastly, I will discuss my findings and the knowledge gained through this study. In developing a deeper understanding of cookbooks as products, artifacts, literary texts, and tools for discourse analysis, I hope to highlight the potential they have for academic research and the value they hold as folk art. *My Greek Taverna*, *My Greek Table*, and *Yiayia* provided me with the opportunity to dive deep into critical thought, and through the use of interdisciplinary tools, expanded my knowledge on the way Greekness is portrayed for foreign audiences, on the fluidity of culture, genre, and identity. Through this thesis, I grew to have an even deeper appreciation for these books, and for cookbooks at large; as pedestrian as they might seem to many, to me they hold immense value, both artistic and emotional as well as scientific.

My Greek Taverna

The taverna is open for business, get a table!

My Greek Taverna is a unique case amongst the three books that are being examined due to the fact that it is both a cookbook in the typical sense, while also being a souvenir for the visitor of Greece to take with them at the end of their vacation, as the subtitle “*Taking Greek Cuisine Back Home*” itself suggests. This book is a product that exists as a result of the booming tourism industry that Greece has developed, and as such, the way it represents Greek cuisine and culture is carefully curated and edited so that it adheres to the branding conventions that promote the nation as a travel destination for millions of tourists every year.

Both of the co-creators of *My Greek Taverna* are Greeks themselves, have lived most of their lives, and have built their careers in Greece. Athenian-born Ioanna Pavlaki is the marketing director at Attica Medea Group and the Editor in Chief of the *My Greek* book series. In the gatefold cover of the book, Pavlaki states that, during the summers of her childhood spent in Lesbos with her grandmother, her hobby of reading cookbooks as she traveled around Greece and the world, perhaps, was one of the main inspirations for this book series. She graduated from the public Lyceum of Psychico and later studied at The London School of Economics and Political Science, obtaining a master’s in sociology (LinkedIn). Her co-creator, Makis Georgiadis, was also born in Athens, but his lineage stems from Alexandria, where his grandfather was a well-respected chef. Although he originally studied law in Athens, Georgiadis decided to continue the tradition set by his grandfather and became a chef himself. One of his specialties is food styling – in fact, he was among the Greek chefs who brought the art of styling to the forefront in the Greek culinary scene. He has collaborated with many cooking magazines in Greece, and his recipes are now exclusive to *Vima Gourmet*. He is also known for working with other renowned peers and running a catering company on top of authoring cookbooks, including *My Greek Taverna* (Captainbook.gr).

Their book *My Greek Taverna* was published in 2018 under Pedio Publishing in English. The book is targeted at tourists visiting the country, who enjoy the food of Greece and might want to make some themselves at home. With this book, we see those two authors collaborate to create a tourist guide to Greek cooking, incorporating many of the classic favorites while also introducing many new flavors to the foreign palate. Made by the hands of a marketing director and a celebrity chef, the book is expertly marketed with its blatant and sometimes over-the-top Greekness.

Genre and Aesthetics

The cover is a vibrant blue, with the title in bold white lettering. These two colors have become synonymous with Greece, being the main two colors that characterize many Aegean islands, as well as the country’s flag, and are therefore chosen to enhance the Greekness of the book at first glance. The title, in bold white letters over a blue backdrop, reads: “*My Greek Taverna*”, with the word taverna being in calligraphic italics. Surrounding the title are a few easily recognizable Greek dishes, namely: tzatziki, a Greek salad, octopus, and fava, along with some tsipouro. Along with the dishes, there are some bright pink bougainvilleas adding a bit more color and contrasting with the light blue of the table-like cover. The flowers are, of course, also evocative of the Cyclades as they

are found decorating many of the islands (as well as the hackneyed postcards). The cover of the book, with its bright and lively colors, creates an idealistic atmosphere and is vividly stereotypical. The plates of perfectly presented food atop a blue table, with flowers thrown about, add to the charm of what could be described as a romantic meal on a Greek island. Charm is a key selling point with this book; all the recipes are photographed to look beautiful and charming, not only enticing the reader to make them at home, but perhaps more importantly, leaving them wanting seconds of the food as well as of their Greek vacation. Even with these idealistic visuals characterizing the book at first glance, the description on the back cover places importance on authenticity, stating that the book will be “*featuring all the dishes you will come across in an authentic Greek taverna or on any family’s Sunday table*”.

With a total of 65 recipes, this book is divided into eight sections based on general categories. The pages that are the table of contents of this book are designed in a way that makes them look like a menu, as well as having the word ‘*Menu*’ itself as a heading. The first of the eight sections, titled “*Mezedes*”, is for entrees and side dishes, after it come the sections for salads, pies, legumes and seafood respectively, which are then followed by the sixth and less specific in categorization chapter that is simply titled “*Traditional Greek Dishes*”, after that the seventh which is dedicated to deserts and coffee and the last one which focuses on drinks. These sections are all color-coded, and each of their assigned color, as seen on this table, is then carried over to the chapter itself. This color coordination is a great touch that also proves that this is a product made with precision and a keen interest in its aesthetic appeal.

Before the first chapter begins, however, the reader is also given some information about the book and its story. The first page of the book welcomes the reader both in English and in Greek, providing the Greek word ‘καλωσόρισες’, the transliterated ‘kalosorises’, and the translated ‘welcome’. This is the way most recipe names are also presented within the book itself. This is an interesting choice; one would expect to be welcomed when entering a space, not necessarily when opening a book. By addressing the presence of a reader in this way, the authors give the book its own voice and make the reading experience more personal. In addition, they give the book the ‘atmosphere’ of a taverna, of a third space where Greek culture will be presented through this imaginary setting. Following the book’s welcome is the ‘menu’ table of contents mentioned before (p. 4 – 5), and then right after is the dedication (p. 7), which goes out to “*Every visitor to Greece*”, further establishing this book as a product meant for, and maybe even pandering to, tourists. On this page, Pavlaki goes on to describe a chance encounter she had at a taverna in Lesbos with a couple from Norway who were on vacation, going on to say that the time they spent in that taverna inspired this book. Pavlaki states that:

This book, ‘My Greek Taverna’, grew from the ambition to capture and illustrate these unique moments, these genuine rituals. It was created as a delicious memory of autumns, winters, springs and summers in Greece. A memory that will be renewed each time you, the reader, go through its pages, choosing something Greek to cook, share and enjoy with family and friends. (p. 7)

In the following pages, Pavlaki gives a description of the taverna and how it is ideally experienced (“*It’s an experience. It’s a feeling. It’s the Greek way of savouring delicious food. Put simply, it’s a microcosm of Greek gastronomy and culture*”, p. 9), with four photographs of a taverna

setting provided (p. 8). In a similar fashion, she discusses Greek cuisine (p. 11, preceded by photos of food like cheeses and vegetables, p. 10), and attempts to distill its distinctive character: “*This cuisine is Mediterranean; balanced between East and West, between sea and mountain. It is deeply rooted in tradition, but also welcomes experimentation. It is an unpretentious cuisine, yet at the same time impressive*”. After this, she goes on to discuss olive oil, not only as a product but also as a symbol that holds great cultural and historical importance. “*For the ancient Greeks, olive oil was the ‘essence of life’. Today, little has changed*” (p. 13), with a picture of olives to match the subject of discussion (p. 12). The subject matter of these introductory texts is ‘everything Greek’, enhancing the Greekness of the book even further, while also giving some information and personal perspective from Pavlaki.

With taverna food being the thematic concept at the core of this book’s identity, in the first page after the welcome, the authors provide the readers with a definition of the ‘Greek Taverna’. Their definition explains that a taverna is not simply a place where people go to eat, but rather a pillar of Greek cuisine and social life, stating:

The dictionary definition of “taverna” is a casual restaurant that serves simple Greek cuisine. However, the true essence of the Greek taverna goes far deeper than that. It is the place where Greek cuisine blossoms, where people meet, where groups of friends are formed, where each day small rituals of generosity are enacted and we raise our glasses to everyone’s health (p. 1)

There are a few things worth discussing that have been included in this small piece of text. The first one being the use of the pronoun ‘we’; which establishes the identity of the authors and of the book’s voice as being part of, and representing, the Greek ingroup. Secondly, this statement is not untrue, but the way it is being presented is rather romanticized. The taverna is painted as an ideal space and is removed from the mundane reality of the hospitality industry. The authors here construct a new meaning for the taverna, a modern ‘myth’ that falls in line with a desirable tourist experience of eating out in Greece. On page nine, the authors add to the romanticism by painting an image of the taverna that fits in with the ideal vision a tourist might have, then beckoning the tourist to come in, “*A taverna is a delicious, warm Greek embrace. Please come in...*” (p. 9).

Picture perfect

Strangely, however, the pictures used to depict tavernas are entirely empty of people. Although the taverna is described as a place of community and togetherness, in the pictures we see that what could be assumed to be tavernas (p. 8 & 15) are solitary, beautiful, and peaceful places, but not what has been described. A picture that is most interesting is the one used on page 15, which takes up the page itself, and it depicts a oneiric view. A table with food and drink is set in the shade, the chairs and the couch around the table are empty, and in the background we see the blue ocean and a white boat. The perfect view calls the one viewing the photograph to take a seat, so they can eat and drink while taking in the sight, quiet and removed from any other noise in an otherwise empty taverna – a tourist’s dream. This picture asks its viewer to imagine themselves in that situation, and therefore it beckons them to visit or revisit Greece with the promise that they too can experience such carefree bliss, unbothered by other tourists or even locals. *My Greek Taverna*, by nature, is an advertisement for Greece’s tourism, and the images used within are aspects of its advertisement message and, as a result, the signification of the image is without a doubt intentional (Barthes 33).

The text that comes right before this picture is “*It’s a Feeling. It’s an Experience. It’s the Taste of Greece!*” with the words ‘Feeling’, ‘Experience’, ‘Taste’, and ‘Greece!’ being italicized and colored blue. This phrase acts as a caption to this image, but there is no clear answer to what ‘It’ is; it could be referring to food or the taverna, or maybe this book itself. Perhaps the text and its message here come second to the emotion it hopes to create in cooperation with the image. Namely, the emotion of desire, or of yearning for that non-specified feeling, that nondescript experience, and the taste of Greece, whatever those may be, can be left to the imagination of the reader, who will base them on their personal vacation experience. The image here is much more direct than the text in achieving the goal of advertising (not only Greece as a destination, I should mention, but also the sponsor of this book: *Ouzo of Plomari – Isidoros Arvanitis*).

The photography in this book is expertly and professionally shot; the subjects and settings all evoke the feeling of summer relaxation with scenic views and delicious food. The food specifically is photographed uniformly, and there is a formulaic quality to each chapter. In the first chapter, for example, the food is shot from above with very few exceptions, and the table atop which the dishes are placed is always a marble surface. On the other hand, in chapter two, the table is always covered by a napkin, like the one that is always laid down at a taverna’s table, while in chapter three, the table is rustic brown wood. That is to say, the curation of this book’s aesthetic is very detailed and thorough, the food is presented cleanly and plainly, and there is hardly anything else to look at in each photograph other than the food itself. There is a limited number of photographs that depict scenic views in the book, all of which can be found in the introduction, where the myth is created. The food selected in this book is by no means inauthentic, nor does it misrepresent Greek cuisine or culture. What *My Greek Taverna* does not include in its photography is the sense of spontaneity that characterizes, as we shall see, the depictions of Greece in *Yiayia* and *My Greek Table*. This book chooses to showcase a much more edited version of cultural dishes. Such a tactic is commonplace in cookbooks, since many of the genre do not make a habit of presenting the messiness of what and how we cook, only focusing on the perfected final product. The authors in this book present a glazed and edited image, not only of food, but of Greekness through its culinary traditions. The myth of the Greek taverna, as presented by this book, becomes a window through which Greek culture is filtered and perceived by the foreign eye.

Greece, food tourism and national branding

No person can avoid eating while traveling. After all, food is obligatory and, just like the locals, the tourists need to eat as well (Richards 13). It is easier for a tourist to eat a meal comprised of local food than to look for dishes they are familiar with, as sourcing familiar dishes might prove challenging while traveling outside of their home country. Many tourists even look forward to that aspect of travel, and some could feel urged to visit a nation for the sake of its food. A nation’s cuisine can be a tourist attraction in and of itself and can be a motive for potential visitors. ‘Greece’ is not only a country but a brand and, as such, its image must be well maintained in order for it to survive and thrive in the market. This cookbook and its contemporaries are a cog in the well-oiled yet rusty machine that is the Greek tourism industry, one of the major industries the country has, and one that cannot be allowed to fail or falter.

The book *My Greek Taverna* is marketed to the culinary tourist, an individual who enjoys the food of Greece and is invested enough in food culture to buy a cookbook as a souvenir. It is also a

constant advertisement for Greece, meant to entice the buyer into wanting to return and eat ready-made Greek food. For this reason, it romanticizes the taverna and Greek food as a whole, saying:

It is an unpretentious cuisine, yet at the same time impressive. Above all, it is characterized by the clarity of its flavours, its simplicity, but also its richness and intensity. It is a gastronomic tribute to moderation, based on the unique flora and fauna of a fertile, diverse land and its surrounding seas.

Greek cuisine bears the seal of the country's famed olive oil, but also of its many local cheeses, aromatic herbs and wild greens, tasty rusks and mouthwatering pies. It treasures the vegetables that grow under the hot sun; it embraces the fish and other seafood from local waters and the lean meat of grass-fed animals.

With an enormous variety of recipes that conceal the wisdom of a cuisine that is simple but not simplistic, the Greek culinary art takes humble ingredients and transforms them into high-end gastronomy, a hymn to life, creativity and companionship. (p. 11)

There is lyricism in this segment of text, transparent throughout the three paragraphs. These statements come from a section in the book's introduction that is dedicated to Greek cuisine. The words used to describe Greek food (simplicity, richness, intensity, moderation), as well as the repeating use of antonyms ('unpretentious – impressive', 'simplicity – intensity', 'richness – moderation', and 'simple – not simplistic'), help the authors cast a wide net for the book's audience, a flavor for every palate. In addition, this description removes food from its post-industrial societal context, painting the food industry of Greece as an ideal re-imagination of the more pragmatic, and sometimes even harsh, reality ("*treasures the vegetables*", "*embraces the fish*", "*grass-fed animals*").

The image of Greece being presented by a tourist product like this book will naturally adhere to the national brand. This, however, leaves no room for nuance in the representation of culture and heritage. *My Greek Taverna* essentializes Greece's culinary culture and transforms it into something that is meant to create nostalgia for 'the good old days' where 'everything was simple'.

Authenticity sells

There exists this idea that whatever is meant for the tourist is inauthentic; anyone can attest to that. From personal account, I purchased this book from a local store and felt a sense of 'cringe' while doing so, feeling awkward about the idea of partaking in what can be perceived as a touristy activity, partially in fear of being seen as a tourist or 'other' by my fellow natives. There was almost a taboo quality to buying it; this product was not meant for me, this product that a Greek native should know better than to buy, due to its inauthentic nature. In some instances, whether something is or is not authentic matters less than it being perceived as authentic by the one willing to consume it. Thereby, authenticity is essentialised, becoming a desirable holiday experience more than a state of being. It also means different things for the one who can judge something to be authentic and to the one who consumes it and delights in the knowledge that it is authentic. The first becomes a critic, appraising something to see whether or not it deserves their stamp of approval, which aims to elevate the object's status, giving it heightened value. The one who has appointed themselves as the

judge/connoisseur establishes their cultural identity in relation to the object of their critique, and gets to deem it worthy or unworthy of holding that same identity, and by doing so, they obtain a sense of self-importance. The discourse of authenticity also thrives in the production and advertisement of cookbooks and ethnic restaurants (Abarca 4). Let's not forget that in the context of foodstuffs, eating can be a social practice, and being seen eating 'authentic food' can give an air of cosmopolitanism, elevating a person's status in the eyes of others.

Mu Li recounts a personal experience where, while working as staff in a North American-Chinese restaurant, they were asked by a Chinese costumer in Chinese, whether or not the food ordered for the table "*was edible*" because the dishes that had been selected were westernized and therefore inauthentic to the food eaten in mainland China (Li 286). Here we see that in the eyes of the critic, inauthenticity can amount to inedibility, both in regard to the food having an unfavorable flavor profile, in relation and comparison to the more authentic dishes they are accustomed to, and also in the context of eating as a societal act, where you are judged by what and how you eat. Barthes, in his work *Mythologies*, stated that "*To eat steak rare therefore represents both a nature and a morality*" (Barthes 62) when discussing the dish in the French context, but so can be said for almost any meal, and when consumed publicly, it can be a performance that one may use to reinstate their own morality and status. By extension, in regard to the current example, it could be stated that for the connoisseur, to eat and even enjoy the inauthentic, can potentially leave them open to the judgement of other critics who will see them do so because, just like in buying this book, 'they should know better' than to partake of the inauthentic.

Similarly, on a discussion about wine drinking, Barthes states that knowing the appropriate way of consuming it is "*a national technique which serves to qualify the French-man, to demonstrate at once his performance, his control and his sociability*" (Barthes 59). Then it does not only matter what you eat, but also how you eat. Even if one eats an authentic dish, if they do not do so in its intended manner of consumption, they are not wholly experiencing its nature. Another great example of this comes from Mu Li's work once more, in the form of the (non-Chinese) elderly couple who proclaimed "let's do chopsticks!" when offered a knife and fork (Li 286). This kind of behavior acts as a qualifier that dictates the type of consumer one is, while also demonstrating their performance, control, and sociability (Barthes 59). This, of course, is influenced by the fact that they are eating in a Chinese establishment; the context of the space urges them to eat the food in a way that is true to it.

The authors of this book prescribed a specific way to eat Greek food in a taverna, at the very start of the book. Notably, they describe it as: "*a relaxing haven after a dip in the sea [...] the sound of the bouzouki*" with "*the tamarisk trees dripping salty tears onto your head [...] as you relish grilled octopus or take your fist bite of moussaka*", "*beneath an ever-shining sun, cooled by gentle sea breezes and shaded by towering mountains*" (p. 9). These stereotypical and idealized descriptions convey a message that tells the reader that, to eat authentically, they must be in Greece; otherwise, the experience will be null. This notion exists in opposition to this book's purpose, which was stated on the cover as "*Taking Greek Cuisine Back Home*". However, this does not constitute a problem, because a covert goal of this book is an advertisement for a revisit to Greece, where the reader will not have to cook these dishes themselves, when they can simply order them at the taverna, and wait for their arrival. This vicarious tourism, called 'ersatz' by Wantanee Suntikul, can only go so far in satisfying a person who has had the real thing (Suntikul 1081). The taverna is almost the 'wild

habitat' of Greek cuisine in accordance with such logic, and that habitat cannot be transplanted elsewhere in the world because it is explicitly tied to their vacation experience. This book offers these consumers a way to take their vacation experience with them as they return to their daily lives. The prose used by the authors and the images they include, as seen on page nine with the description of the taverna, are in many ways clichés of the vacation experience in Greece, directed heavily towards the sun and sand traveler.

Orientalism

Popular culture does not necessarily follow in the footsteps of science and academia. Ever since Edward Said's introduction of the concept, orientalist tendencies and modes of thinking have come under severe attack, especially in the context of post-colonial and intercultural studies. This does not preclude authors and visual artists, especially those whose works are of interest to the tourist industry, from taking advantage of the West-East bipolar scheme and of employing techniques that aim at exoticizing cultures. The authors of *My Greek Taverna* display such tendencies in two respects: in their attempt to exoticize aspects of Greek culture, hence enhancing its allure as a vacation spot (in this case, we might speak of self-exoticization), and in their tendency to trace elements of Greek cuisine to their Turkish or Middle Eastern origin, thereby assigning them an "oriental" label.

The authors of *My Greek Taverna* make the intended audience for this book very clear, and make great efforts to adhere to that audience's desires and expectations of what is Greek. They transform the taverna into a utopian location, and this book into a third space where culture transforms into an essentialized fantasy meant for the foreign eye. The romantic descriptions of the Taverna, Greek cuisine, and olive oil found at the start of the book (p 1 – 15), the photographs of beautiful landscapes that are empty of people, and the perfectly plated and presented food, create an image detached from any sense of specific location and personal experience. Instead, they generalize Greek culture in hopes of being a one-size-fits-all, easy for the tourist to appreciate and immerse themselves in. This way of presenting culture is almost a reflection of the imaginative writings that many Europeans wrote regarding what they perceived as 'the Orient'. In the case of this book, however, the authors are not outsiders looking in on a culture and land that is foreign to them. They establish themselves as part of the in-group, and yet they write about Greece in a way that a foreigner would, as a way to connect more easily with an audience who can only view Greece as a vacation spot. In this regard, we see the authors exoticize their own nation through the photography and the text.

The word "oriental" itself is used to describe three dishes in this book. In page 126, soutzoukakia, a dish that was introduced to the culinary culture of Greece during its Ottoman occupation, are described as "*An oriental dish with the cumin dominating and amplifying the flavour profile of the ingredients*", with moshari youvetsi receiving similar treatment in page 128, described as "*Oriental orzo pasta is combined with fine veal and plenty of fresh summer tomatoes. A trademark Greek dish, ideal for large families or groups of friends*". The third instance of the word is in the dessert section of the book, where on page 152, halvas is defined as "*Simple and easy to prepare, it showcases the philosophy of oriental confectionery*". These dishes are culinary complexities (Örs 225) in Greek, Turkish, as well as North African and Middle Eastern culinary traditions. These dishes are present in many communities and are therefore almost impossible to pin down and attribute to a single

nation. Not all dishes that share this trait in this book are described in the same way as the three mentioned; for example, the stuffed vine leaves on page 34 are described with a more generalized “Mediterranean” instead of “Greek” or “oriental” since they can be found across many cultures.

However, the use of the term “oriental” is orientalist in and of itself, as it “others” those dishes in comparison to the rest that can be found in this book. As the cookbook is a product marketed to pose as a guide to traditional Greek dishes, there is some self-exoticization present in the way the authors describe the country’s character through these dishes. Greece has had to adapt to the surge in tourist activity it has been seeing for the last few decades. In this attempt to adapt, there has been a tendency for the nation brand to simplify and unify its image in an attempt to become more digestible for tourists. This is done to avoid the “fear of the unknown” breaking the vacation immersion and escapism. One of the tactics used by orientalism is the simplification and commodification of culture for the Western consumer, and although not all tourists or readers of this book will be from the West, the tactic of self-orientalization can still serve its purpose of simplifying the culinary complexities of these dishes, whose origins are widely disputed.

A close reading on Coffee

An interesting text in the book is the section dedicated to coffee, where the authors begin by acknowledging the multiethnic nature of this drink. Greece and its culture are placed in its geographical context here, and present the more nuanced side of culinary culture, where a dish does not necessarily belong to one ethnic group but rather is shared amongst neighboring countries.

Greek, Turkish, Armenian, Arabian. You will come across all of these names, depending on where in the Eastern Mediterranean or Near East you find yourself. It is a type of coffee that needs time to be prepared and even more time and good company to be enjoyed to the fullest. (p. 156)

This discussion can be a taboo for many, as we have the tendency to stake sole claim on something we enjoy, hence this naming convention that all these countries use for this drink. This way of describing or identifying this cultural ‘relic’ leads to an objectification of culture and suggests that people and communities not only have, but also own, “culture” (Hauser-Schäublin and Prott, 10). Coffee has become the cultural ‘property’ or heritage of all sides, all the while, each side will tend to contest the claims of ownership stated by the others in a constant tug of war. The authors of *My Greek Taverna* go against that idea and instead present Greece and its culinary culture in a more grounded manner, embracing the external influences it has been exposed to throughout its history, which have had a heavy impact on its culinary world alongside its culture.

It is made using finely ground coffee beans simmered with water and usually sugar in a special copper pot called a "briki". First heat the water in the pot, then dissolve the sugar (if using) and lastly the coffee. Let the coffee simmer on the stove. Stir constantly.

The coffee is ready when it has boiled and the characteristic foam, called "kaimaki", has formed on the top. You can drink your Greek coffee unsweetened ("sketos"), which requires only 1 teaspoon of finely ground coffee, medium-sweet ("metrios"), with 1 teaspoon of coffee and 1 teaspoon of sugar, or very sweet ("varis glikos"), with 1 teaspoon of coffee and 2 teaspoons of sugar.

It is served in a small cup, just slightly larger than an espresso cup. But it can also be made in a double version, simply by doubling the quantity of each ingredient. (p. 156)

This book, much like the two others that are being examined, is rich in transliterations and italicization. These act as a pronunciation guide for the reader, while also giving away small details about Greece's culinary culture, language, and norms. Transliteration is used to accentuate the Greekness of the book. In addition to that, the italicization that these words are most often characterized by makes them stand out in the text, all the while lessening the 'abruptness' of the transliteration. In the context of *My Greek Taverna* in particular, however, they can also be helpful words and concepts for tourists to be familiar with for everyday conversation. In the specific case of the above text, the reader will grow to understand the preparation techniques and the three varieties of traditional 'Greek' coffee, while also gaining the ability to order them using Greek terms if they desire.

My Greek Table

The culinary ambassador

The book *My Greek Table* is one of ten books in author Diane Kochilas' repertoire. This book is a byproduct of the television series that shares the same name. In it, she aims to create a more personal product compared to her previous works, where she will guide the reader through her cooking habits and life experiences. Throughout this book, Kochilas includes personal anecdotes, valuable guidance, and passages that brim with her knowledge regarding the cultural and social history of food in Greece.

Diane Kochilas is an author with worldwide renown and many accolades. Born to a first-generation immigrant Greek father and an (Italian-)Greek-American mother, her formative years were spent in Queens, New York, where she studied at a Greek parochial school as a child (KLCS). Her father, originally from the island of Ikaria, who was also a professional chef, was a great influence on Diane's life (The Hellenic Initiative). After graduating with a Bachelor's in Arts in journalism, French language, and Literature (impactalk) she followed a path directly linked with Greek cuisine.

As a celebrity chef Diane has appeared and starred in many television programs in both the United States and in Greece and Cyprus, having guest starred in *Martha Stewart Living* and *The Today Show* to name a few, while also running shows like *My Greek Table* on American broadcaster PBS and *Ti Tha Fame Simera Mama; (What Are We Going to Eat Today, Mom?)* on Greek and Cypriot television. As a writer, she has made many contributions to American and international publications such as *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Gourmet*, and *Food & Wine* among others, while also being a weekly columnist for the daily *Ta Nea* in Greece where she discusses gastronomy, food history, restaurants and a myriad of other topics in relation to cuisine (dianekochilas.com). In addition, she also runs a cooking school on her ancestral island of Ikaria every summer. She has also been awarded the Jane Grigson Award for Excellence in Research by the International Association of Culinary Professionals in 2002 for her book '*The Glorious Foods of Greece*' (dianekochilas.com) and also won best cookbook in 2015 for '*Ikaria: Lessons of Food, Life & Longevity from the Greek Island Where People Forget to Die*'. The book *My Greek Table* was published by St. Martin's Griffin in 2018 and is a byproduct of the television show, which airs in the United States, as well as in Canada, Australia, China, and Greece (dianekochilas.com). Therefore, the potential reader of this book is someone who is already tuned in to the show or who knows of Kochilas and her previous works. This book is mostly targeted at an American audience, since it is available only in English and is published by an American company.

Her knowledge of culinary history, in addition to her diasporic identity, has allowed Kochilas to create a book where Greek culture and cooking are shown both in a way that represents its heritage on a deeper level, providing historical and cultural insight, while also showcasing the ability of culinary culture to evolve and adapt to the needs of modern cooks and consumers.

Variations to a pattern: aesthetics and national branding

The aspect that draws the eye on the front cover the most is, of course, the big picture of Diane Kochilas, taking up half the page. This is her book, and as a recognizable celebrity chef, it stands to reason that a photograph of her likeness will be included in her product. In doing so, she positions herself as the mediator between Greek and American culinary culture and as the face of Greek cuisine for her readers. This is also reflected by the use of the pronoun ‘My’ in the title, which is used differently from ‘*My Greek Taverna*’. In Kochilas’s case, the word is used to refer to her, whereas the other book uses it in reference to the reader. This is because in *My Greek Taverna*, the cover has no human subject for that pronoun to be directed towards; as a result, the reader is left to interpret it as ‘their’ Greek taverna. Furthermore, the word ‘My’ in the case of Kochilas’s book implies that this book will not present a personalized version of Greek cooking, which also differentiates it from the more traditional approach that Miari takes in *Yiayia*. Looking once again at the photo on the cover, what is shown is an image of Kochilas from the waist, she is holding up some fresh herbs with a warm smile on her face. She is wearing a plain blue shirt with a white cardigan over it; it is simple, which depicts her as approachable and kind. The background is heavily blurred, making her the only point of focus in the photo. Along with this picture, there is a bubble of text prompting the reader to watch the show the book is based on. Under the picture is the author’s full name, the title, and the subtitle, along with three additional pictures of foods that are included as recipes in the book.

Much like the other books being examined, the two main colors present in the book’s exterior are white and blue, with green and red accompanying the two, but on a smaller scale. The red only appears in the form of a text bubble, informing the reader about the show sharing the book’s name, urging the readers to tune in. This red bubble appears to be intentionally designed to resemble a sticker, but one that cannot be removed. The color green is used for Kochilas’s name and for the subtitle of the book. The shade being used here echoes the hue of the fresh herbs that Kochilas is holding in the picture. The blue appears in the title and in the clothes she is wearing. The book’s title is in bold, large lettering with a dark blue tone, contrasting with the light blue of her shirt. On the other hand, white serves as the backdrop upon which all other aspects of the cover are arranged. White also appears in Kochilas’s jacket, where it pairs with the blue to form the classic color combination that evokes Greece and its cultural identity. She is donning the national colors. These aesthetic choices fall in line with the national brand; the cover employs multiple indicators of Greekness, without essentializing the image of the celebrity chef. The references to Greek identity are subtle, relying more on color than on overt symbolism, while the use of red and green could be seen as an indicator that this book will not follow tradition.

It is interesting, of course, to note the similarity in the titles for *My Greek Taverna* and *My Greek Table*. Kochilas’s work predates the publication of the touristy product, and with her being a celebrity chef well known for her Greek cooking, the possibility that *My Greek Taverna* draws inspiration from her regarding this naming convention is not out of the question. But this can only be speculative. The author and chef has had shows aired in Greece and Cyprus, but the televised version of this book was not one of those. Following that, the subtitle here reads “*Authentic Flavors and Modern Home Cooking from My Kitchen to Yours*”, alluding to the fusion of classic Greek

cuisine with the more modern elements added by Kochilas, that make the recipes more in tune with today's consumer demands and appetites, while also making some recipes more accessible to people outside of Greece that may be unable to procure specific regional ingredients. The use of 'Authentic' here also continues the trend seen in the other two books that proclaim the authenticity of their recipes, making sure to use that word on their front and or back covers for marketing purposes.

The back of the book follows the simplicity that characterizes the cover. It includes a few small paragraphs of text and a picture of pita bread with what looks to be a yogurt-based dip, two foods that are regarded as iconic in Greek cuisine. The text goes as follows:

To accompany her new hit public television show, My Greek Table, Diane Kochilas shares recipes and stories inspired by her travels and family gatherings throughout Greece. Celebrating the country's ancient culture and food, Diane's new book brings dishes to your table crafted from natural ingredients and prepared both in the region's traditional styles as well as in contemporary ways that put a modern spin on classics everyone loves. Perfect for home cooks. The recipes in My Greek table feature simple-to-follow instructions for salads, mezeds, vegetables, soups, grains, savory pies, meats, fish and sweets including:

Kale, Apple and Feta Salad

Avocado-Tahini Spread

Tsoureki French Toast

Baked Chicken Keftedes

Spanakopita Mac 'n' Cheese

Retro Feta-Stuffed Grilled Calamari

Portobello Mushroom Gyro

Aegean Island Stuffed Lamb

My Big Fat Greek Mess – a dessert of meringues, Greek sweets, toasted almonds, and tangy yogurt.

Illustrated throughout with color photographs featuring both the food and the country Diane Kochilas loves the best, My Greek Table will soon turn your table into a sun-drenched Aegean feast.

A few things are noteworthy in this section. The first thing one notices is that this description is not written by Kochilas herself, but by someone writing in the third person and presenting both the book and its author. Through this, the readers are put in an outsider's point of view, with their point of contact being a third voice and not that of the author herself. This is a strange choice since, throughout the book, Kochilas does address the readers personally and speaks in first person about her experiences and expertise. Strange as it may be, the choice bolsters the image of a celebrity chef, who is being introduced and spoken of highly by someone else, even if that voice is faceless and nameless in this case. In addition to that, one of the first things being referenced in this description is Greece's ancient heritage ("*Celebrating the country's ancient culture and food*"),

which is a point of reference that is often brought up by Kochilas herself in the book's interior. This is seen through mentions of how ancient a lot of the food she includes in this book is, while also bringing up Greece's ancient history and mythology whenever the chance comes up. Following this, the core identity of this book gets established by the phrase "*Diane's new book brings dishes to your table crafted from natural ingredients and prepared both in the region's traditional styles as well as in contemporary ways that put a modern spin on classics everyone loves*". There are a few things that get highlighted here. The first is the use of the term 'natural ingredients' with 'natural' being a point of emphasis; this book places great value in wellness, homeliness, and seasonality. Another important point made here is that the food within this book is traditional and at the same time contemporary, a fact that is proven by the list of examples provided. Kochilas includes a wealth of dishes that draw from Greek culinary tradition but are modernized. In this regard, *My Greek Table* is a unique case amongst the three being studied, as the volume of experimental and fusion dishes included is much larger compared to the other two.

The names of the dishes on the back cover alone are very telling of this. The Avocado-Tahini Spread mentioned, and then later found on page 52, is a re-imagined version of the traditional tahinosalata (a sesame paste-based spread mostly consumed during fasts). The avocado is a new addition to the ingredients of this dish, and a new addition to the Greek table, but it is a well-known classic in the American diet. The dish 'My Big Fat Greek Mess' is Kochilas's Greek take on the British 'Eton Mess', creating a fusion dish and a play-on-words that references the famous movie *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, which her American readers will enjoy. Some similarly re-imagined dishes mentioned are Tsoureki French Toast and Portobello Mushroom Gyro, found on pages 39 and 134, respectively. These showcase new applications of traditional food; the traditional brioche-like tsoureki is made into a breakfast meal, and gyro, a meat-packed sandwich, is now vegetarian. By highlighting these dishes in the back cover, Kochilas gives the reader a taste of her unique approach to Greek food, and piques their curiosity.

Photographs; a collage of food and life

The interior contents of this book follow a slightly different logic compared to the other two that have been examined. In this instance, photography is used a little more selectively. Something that is easy to notice at first glance is that there are plenty of dishes that have no corresponding image, the kind meant to showcase the food while also showing what the end product ought to look like. This does not mean that this book is lacking in photography. The chapter dividers are a full spread of photographs, with one page being a scenic image and the other something that relates to the upcoming chapter. For example, pages 42 and 43, dedicated to the chapter "*Fun Dips to Dive Into*", have an image of pita bread cut into small pieces and a beach, respectively, creating a play on words with the dips that this chapter is dedicated to and a "dip in the sea". But even amongst the recipes, there are plenty of images depicting natural or cityscapes. On many occasions, there are recipes that lack a picture of the food that is being written about, and instead are given a photograph of a scenic location or of other unrelated subjects. Within this unique approach, those rustic scenic pictures vary greatly in scale as well as in content. For example, we see a scope of a sea-side village with the recipe for eggplant rolls (p. 173), a picture of a cat with the recipe for Serifos Chickpea "Sausages" (p. 203) and another cat for the zucchini pie (p. 271), we are shown the Greek flag on a boat for Braised Octopus (p. 331) and the ruins of a castle overtaken by nature for "My Big Fat Greek

Mess” (p. 361), just to name a few. As a result, this book starts to give the impression of reading a diary or a collage of sorts, where the author has attached pictures at whim or out of personal drive, or because they might be connected to a memory that relates to that recipe. The food photography is always expertly shot, making the food look appealing and flawless. Thus, and even though the scenic images are clearly the work of a professional, they give the impression of spur-of-the-moment shots, and hence feel more personal.

There is also the appearance of the rare instructional collage, giving a step-by-step guide of the preparation of a dish that might have a higher scale of difficulty in its execution. Such are the cases for the stuffed grape leaves (p. 74 – 75) and the spinach cheese pie (p. 262 – 263), where we can see a pair of hands making the food. Interestingly, for a celebrity chef’s cookbook, those photographs are faceless, focusing more on the food instead of the person making it. An overview of the book reveals that Kochilas is scarcely visible beyond the cover, but her authorship is always seen through the text, in addition to the book cover, which acts as a reminder of her presence.

Authenticity and Innovation

In lessening the load of photographs included, more of the reader’s focus is directed to the recipes themselves, as well as to the surrounding texts that are brimming with Kochilas’s culinary knowledge and experience. At many points in the book, Kochilas takes the time to provide insights into the minutiae of Greek culture and history with respect to food and eating habits. She does this mostly by dedicating a page or two at the start of each chapter to discuss the history and culture around subjects like salads (p. 105), breads (p. 131), seafood (p. 319), and so on. She also includes texts of bite-sized information in between recipes. In this manner, she provides additional information on the avgolemono dressing (p. 15), she dedicates two pages to discussing the harvest and processing of olives (p. 68 – 69), further on the way Greek people use olive oil (p. 157), and some history and lore on chickens (p. 293). A good example of her expertise can be taken from the section where she discusses wine on pages 364 to 366; a closer examination could prove fruitful.

I can imagine the excitement of an archeologist in eastern Macedonia, absorbed in the puzzle of his or her work, of piecing together an image of life in prehistoric Greece, meticulously brushing away dirt and debris to unearth some vessel or ancient ditch to find charred pits and the gossamer residuals of pressed grapes. A eureka moment, perhaps, revealing a wine making history that stretches as far back as eight thousand years. So old is the vine and its pleasure-giving juice in this country where almost everything edible and imbibed has been savored in one uninterrupted continuum to this very day

Wild then domesticated Vitis vinifera were part of life in Greece from the deepest recesses of history. Wine has been a prized commodity almost as long as the grape has existed in Greece. Homer mentions the island trade between islands in the northern Aegean and Asia Minor, and writes of renowned wines such as the Pramnios Oinos of Ikaria – by some accounts the same wine with which Odysseus plied the cyclops to get him drunk enough so that he and his men could escape! By the time the Minoan civilization on Crete and the Mycenaeans in the Peloponnese flourished, wine was being shipped and traded all over the known world.

In the first paragraph, we see Kochilas paint a romantic image. What is important to focus on here is her lyrical prose, particularly in lines such as “*So old is the vine and its pleasure-giving juice.*” Such turns of phrase create an atmosphere of euphoria and excitement within the text, conveying Kochilas’s passion for the subject of wine but also of the ancient Greek world in relation to food. This is a pattern that continues in the second paragraph, where she speaks about the history of the wine trade as well as the role it has played in mythology. This section is merely one example among many; Kochilas often mentions information regarding the history of food as well as food-related traditions in other parts of the book. Some examples of this are the ancient Greek symposium that Kochilas brings up in page 65, the importance of legumes and beans in ancient times (p. 189), an adaptation of Minoan food (p. 190), the Elysian mysteries and their relationship with the goddesses Demeter, Persephone and wheat (p. 207), the depictions of chickens in vase paintings (p. 293) and so on. It is worth noting that her primary focus in all those historical anecdotes is the ancient Greek world; she will very rarely discuss more modern history. She does, however, give an overview of wine in Greece throughout the ages. In those sections, she does bring up the Roman (p. 365), Byzantine (p. 365 – 366), and Ottoman empire (p. 366), as well as the more modern events in wine-related history like the phylloxera blight (p. 366).

What is interesting regarding this is that, despite the wealth of knowledge she has, Kochilas does not adhere to tradition in *My Greek Table*. Instead, she chooses to innovate and infuse classic recipes of Greek cuisine with modern elements as well as foreign gastronomic techniques and ingredients. Kochilas seeks to create new recipes that are able to keep up with modern trends and that are appealing to today’s consumers, while also maintaining the integral cultural identity of the particular foods, which are valued as traditional (Guiné et al. 16). This, however, poses a challenge for the author, who uses traditional food products for fusion and modernized dishes, while trying to maintain their traditional identity that ties them to Greekness. In his work about a similar topic, on the challenges the European food industry faces with the dissemination of traditional food products, Jordana points out that many consumers might see it as paradoxical, or even controversial, to innovate on a traditional product (Jordana 151) for the sake of appealing to a globalized palate.

Fusion cooking and diasporic identity

In *My Greek Table*, plenty of the recipes that Kochilas presents showcase the fluid nature of culinary culture. She does this by adding many fusion dishes that combine Greek food with elements from other traditions, such as Mexican and American cuisine. To be more specific, she mentions that throughout her career in the Greek-American food service industry, she has worked closely with non-Greek chefs, often of Mexican descent, who have made great contributions to the creation and evolution of a new fusion style she calls ‘Grec-Mex’. For further analysis, a close reading of the ‘Greek Hot Honey’ recipe on page 13 might prove helpful.

I’ve been working in restaurant kitchens for a long time, and one of the great things about the intense, heated, noisy environment of a busy kitchen is the intuitive blurring of the lines when it comes to making a quick snack for oneself. Most Greek kitchens I’ve worked in have been blessed with amazing crews of Mexican cooks. La Morena brand cans of chipotles in adobo sauce hide behind the tarama and feta; jalapenos have their place tucked behind the produce for Greek dishes; the Cholula hot sauce is drizzled with impunity over just about everything. So it stands to reason

that a few Grec-Mex recipes have found their way into my own repertoire, Hellenized in a way, but also the products of an open palate and an open mind!

This recipe is great with pita chips, grilled chicken or seafood, or used to baste chicken wings on the grill.

Kochilas speaks very candidly here about the evolution of fusion cuisine, specifically in an informal setting. This discussion does not revolve around the creation of food meant for a general consumer audience. Instead, what is being presented here is the serendipitous creation of a new fusion style that combines Greek and Mexican gastronomy, which is a result of the close proximity and cooperation between those two culinary worlds. Kochilas presents the kitchens of the Greek restaurants she has worked in as a contact zone that, under certain conditions (*“intense, heated, noisy environment of a busy kitchen”*), has allowed for cultures that would otherwise not be able to intermingle, mostly due to geographical reasons, to do so intuitively. In this case, we see that New York, a city with multiple immigrant communities and distinctive cultures, creates a third space within which cultural mobility is strongly supported and facilitated, which is in large part due to the closeness created by people’s geographical mobility. This ‘blurring of the lines’, as Kochilas puts it, does not occur for novelty’s sake; the culinary traditions of the Mexican and Greek chefs were brought together by the cooks themselves to satisfy their own desire for cross-cultural bonding. It is this fluidity that is opening up possibilities of belonging beyond the immediate confines of ethnic identification or beyond the borders of nation or strict culinary tradition (Duruz 50).

Cooking, like language, is a universal human experience (Strauss 471), and through fusion cuisine, two cultures come together in a dialogue. This dialogue allows people of different backgrounds to share generational culinary knowledge. This showcases the mobility of food culture and perhaps culture at large, drawing on the myriad influences of an engaged culinary citizenship, being open to invention (or resistance), according to what constitutes *“a good instinct and feel”* (Duruz 49). Grec-Mex is not the only example of this. Kochilas, as a Greek of the diaspora who was born in the United States, also has many dishes that draw on her Greek-American heritage. This is apparent in the inclusion of dishes like the ‘Sloppy Yianni’, a Hellenized version of the ‘Sloppy Joe’ (p. 143), the Spanakopita Grilled Cheese (p. 132), the Spanakopita Mac’ n’ Cheese (p. 232), Greek Yogurt Ranch Sauce (p. 10), Whole Wheat Baklava Muffins (p. 33) and so on. Fusion recipes like the ones above can give insight into the ways in which diaspora impacts culinary culture. These dishes carry a dual cultural identity and leave their mark on both culinary cultures that constitute them, opening the door to cross-cultural dialogue and understanding through the pan-human experience of eating good food.

Food wars, and real ones

Kochilas is proud of her heritage, that much can’t be denied. She has a total of 8 books regarding Greek cooking and food, and 2 about the Mediterranean culinary traditions at large. She has televised shows about Greek cooking and has been invited on many programs to cook and talk about Greek food. Her heritage is part of her brand, and in this book, tradition is treated as a marketable commodity that should be visible and immediately recognizable, exhibiting specific elements (Aspraki 43). In this way, Kochilas makes use of the national brand Greece has established, and by doing so, chooses to adhere to its strict regulations of Greekness. Even though this book includes many modernized and fusion dishes, the Greek element is always the strongest

and the one being highlighted. This is achieved either by the naming convention the recipe follows, where it is stated as explicitly Greek (“Greek Honey Hot Sauce” p. 13, “Sloppy Yianni” p. 143), or by demanding that the ingredients be of Greek origin (Greek pine honey p. 13, extra-virgin Greek olive oil p. 46, dried Greek oregano p. 24). Of course, this much is to be expected of a Greek cookbook. However, what is interesting to examine is the way Kochilas discusses foods that are not of Greek origin in their entirety, or chooses to ignore this parameter entirely. In a section dedicated to dolmades, a dish that was introduced and developed in Greece in the years of its Ottoman occupation, she writes:

For all the ubiquity of dolmades (stuffed, rolled leaves, usually grape leaves) in the Greek kitchen – they are, after all, one of the most iconic Greek mezedes – it is heartening to know that a few places in Greece are home to some of the most unusual renditions of this classic. The most common filling for Greece’s famous stuffed grape leaves is the aromatic combination of onions, rice, fresh herbs, and sometimes pine nuts/or raisins. Ground beef and rice are also a classic filling, especially in the winter, and the dolmades filled with them tend to be served with bechamel or avgolemono sauce. [...]

Today, dolmades are open to all sorts of modern interpretations. Even Greek producers of classic dolmades, sold in either cans or vacuum packs, have broadened the range of their product line to include quinoa, sriracha, and other ingredients in commercial reinterpretations of this time-honored Greek dish (p. 72)

In this paragraph and in the rest of the text regarding the dolma, Kochilas makes absolutely no mention of their Ottoman origin. Instead, we see her repeatedly boast about their Greek-ness (“one of the most iconic Greek mezedes”, “Greece’s famous stuffed grape leaves”, and “time-honored Greek dish”). She has proven herself to be deeply knowledgeable regarding the food history of Greece throughout this book, and as such, it can reasonably be assumed that she would be aware of this dish’s non-Greek origin. This is not to say that this dish is not Greek in any way; it is, and as she points out in the text (p. 72), there are plenty of regionally specific varieties. However, it does not solely ‘belong’ to Greece, something that her readers would not be able to tell by the way she has written about it. This is a pattern that can be seen in the text’s entirety; Kochilas avoids any mention of the Turkish, Middle Eastern, and North African origins of many of the foods she includes. She does shortly mention it in a section regarding baklava.

Baklava, the classic Greek dessert of phyllo dough, filled with nuts, flavored with cinnamon, cloves, and allspice, and dampened with simple honey or sugar syrup, is a dish that has inspired my cooking in more than the dessert department.

The combination of all those warm spices, evocative of the East, translates well to so many other recipes. If you’ve got baklava on hand, try cutting it up into small chunks and mixing it into a container of softened good vanilla ice-cream, then refreezing it. I’ve made baklava ice cream sandwiches and baklava-flavored flans. But it’s in the day’s first meal that those warm spices inspire me the most. Here are two recipes for classic American fare flavored with the aromas of Greek baklava. (p. 32)

She does not go into detail about the history of the dessert, simply saying that it is ‘evocative of the East’. Kochilas is not morally obliged to mention the fact that baklava is not a dish of Greek origin (perhaps even if she is aware of the fact that it is not), since it is indeed a dessert that has become important in the country’s culinary tradition over the last few centuries. However, to also then title it as ‘Greek’ repetitively in the course of those two paragraphs, sends a message (“*the classic Greek dessert*” and “*the aromas of Greek baklava*”). It is also important to note the non-specificity of the term ‘the East’ that Kochilas uses to describe the dessert, as well as the use of the word ‘evocative’. In regard to the first, there could be an orientalist undertone in her phrasing. To sum up the many countries of the Middle East and their myriad culinary traditions into one unified entity is one aspect of orientalism, aiming to essentialize their distinct cultures and histories. As it pertains to the latter, the word ‘evocative’ conveniently avoids the explicit implication of baklava’s Turkish origin, since to ‘evoke’ is not the same as ‘to be of’.

Furthermore, uniquely among the three books being studied, *My Greek Table* lacks a discussion regarding coffee and the polemics of its cultural ownership. Kochilas does include two recipes that require it (p. 351, p. 352 – 353) as well as a short guide on how to make it (p. 353), but does not go into detail about its relevance in the cultures where it is found. But just like dolmades and baklava, she makes sure to refer to it as ‘Greek’ coffee. It is important to state that the other two books do as well, since they are discussing it in the Greek context, but by having a discussion regarding cultural ownership, they use the term ‘Greek coffee’ with the nuance it deserves.

Kochilas often makes references to antiquity in *My Greek Table*, while also showcasing the modern Greek world through her recipes, photographs, and anecdotes. Something to note, however, is that she does not seem to highlight and show reverence to all of Greek history in this way but has a tendency to bracket out the Ottoman period and underplay its influences. In this way, she is following an Orientalist historical paradigm that limits the viewpoint of her reader, giving them access to information regarding periods of Greek history that did not overlap with the ‘Orient’. She is able to depict New York as the multicultural third space it is, but does not do the same with Ottoman Greece. By bypassing this time period in this way, she minimizes its importance in the evolution of Greece’s culinary heritage, but also of its culture.

Not ‘Greek enough’? Too ‘Oriental’? Slather it in bechamel!

It is important to further discuss the background of this concealment. The one dictating that the aspects of Greek culinary culture that come from the nation’s Ottoman past, or from the proximity and long history of trade with the Middle East and North Africa, must be hidden. Kochilas is far from being the first to do this; in fact, this echoes some of the sentiment that was popularized by the Greek chef, Nickolaos Tselementes. Grigoriadou Sofia has given great insight into his work and views by stating that:

he justifies two major shifts he introduced into Greek cuisine at the beginning of the twentieth century, which are now considered ‘traditional’: the use of béchamel sauce and the restriction of spices [...] he sought to set dishes free from ‘the influence and degradation they had suffered from the tastes or preferences of the various oriental peoples’ and their consequent ‘unsightly appearance.’ While the marble-like whiteness of feta is implicated in confrontations between the European South and

North, the opaque whiteness of béchamel proclaims Greece's allegiance to the 'civilized' West" (Grigoriadou 3)

It is important to state that Kochilas is not following in the footsteps of Tselementes, neither in regard to cooking nor in orientalist and racist ideals. Kochilas does not call for lessening spice in her recipes, nor does she make heavy use of béchamel; she also is open to blending Greek cuisine with foreign influences and calls for an open-mindedness regarding (p. 13). Even still, Tselementes has been deeply influential in the culinary history of Greece, and as a result, his influence can be seen even in the cookbook of a Greek-American like Kochilas. Where she glazed the country's culinary culture to fit into the narrative of the national brand, by insisting on the Greek-ness of each dish.

However, this can go beyond just food. In 'Molyvos Eggplant Keftedes' (p. 78), Kochilas mentions a major historical event that marked the history books of both nations. A closer look is vital to examine potential attitudes towards the history and relationship of these two countries in her eyes.

Lesvos, Greece's third largest island, is one of my favorite places. The island's natural environment overflows with wildlife. Over a million olive trees blanket the island; Lesvos's rich natural flora and plankton-rich bays and coves have been renowned since antiquity. [...]

Lesvos found itself in the eye of the European migration crisis, inundated with thousands of refugees who washed up on its shores from the war-torn Middle East as they made their way across the Aegean from the coast of Turkey.

Indeed, the island's proximity to Turkey has shaped its long history, and food is part of that. During the final throes of the Ottoman Empire in 1922, the Greek army, with the blessing of the British, invaded Asia Minor (present-day Turkey) to help liberate the four million Greeks who had been living there since ancient times. Two million were killed, and two million fled. Thousands settled in Lesvos, revitalizing the local economy and cuisine. With it came a rich, urbane, aromatic cooking style and love for the eggplant, for which Lesvos claims at least twenty-two unique local recipes. (p. 78)

In the first paragraph, Kochilas makes a quick reference to the ancient history of the island, a motif that has already been established. She then discusses the events that were taking place in Lesvos while this book was being written. In this short paragraph, it is important to take note of the language used in relation to the immigrants and asylum seekers who have found themselves on the island of Lesvos. Three key words and phrases stand out here: 'inundated', 'washed up', and 'made their way'. The use of 'inundated' implies that the island has been impaired in some way due to the sudden presence of the immigrant population, making them seem like uninvited and unwanted guests. Following that, the term 'washed up' may be in reference to the harsh conditions they were under during their sail; however, this term is still a little belittling and dehumanizing. Lastly, 'made their way' is a term of phrase far too misleading as to the way those groups of refugees came to be on the island, forced to leave their homes and having to brave the sea on boats carrying too many passengers, as a last resort.

In the following paragraph, the author goes on to discuss the 1922 invasion and its aftermath. In this text, it is important to take note not only of the way in which Kochilas goes over the events of that time, but also of how she addresses the Greek immigrants and asylum seekers in comparison to those from the Middle East in recent history. Firstly, it is important to highlight that in the first line, Kochilas acknowledges the influence Turkish culture has had on the island, but curiously enough, that is where the nuance ends.

In the analysis of the narrative she creates about the war of 1922, it is important to examine those key phrases: ‘to help liberate’ and ‘four million Greeks’. Kochilas here presents a version of historical events that is limited in its scope, focusing only on the Greek side of this collision. To say that ‘liberation’ was the only goal of the invasion is misleading; the Greek leadership and army of that time were expansionists, who conveniently used the Greek presence in Asia Minor as the reasoning behind their campaign. The said campaign ended in tragedy for both sides, and was the reason behind the massive loss of life Kochilas mentions later down. Furthermore, the ‘four million Greeks’ statement is sourceless, and the author does not back up that number in any way; it could be a speculative assumption, but such information is, again, misleading. This could also hold true regarding to the number of victims and refugees stated in the text (“*Two million were killed, and two million fled*”).

Within this text, we are presented with two groups of refugees: one is the Greek refugees from the start of the last century, and the present-day refugees from the Middle East. The language Kochilas uses for the two differs greatly, and through its examination, we will see the Greeks being discussed with compassion and the non-Greeks with indifference. The Greek refugees “*fled*” while the non-Greeks “*made their way*” and were “*washed up*” on the island’s shore. For the Greek refugees of the 1920s, she states that their presence ‘revitalized the local economy and cuisine’, whereas the non-Greek refugees inundated the island. The way Kochilas presents the arrival of the Greek refugees of Anatolia is highly romanticized and re-historicized, with the numbers she uses being inflated.

Transliteration and italics – or how to pronounce ‘gigantes’

Transliteration is to be expected in a book that includes words that are a challenge to translate, like the names of dishes. This is the case with *My Greek Table* as well; interestingly, however, the transliterated names of dishes come in secondary to their translated and localized forms. For example, Kochilas presents a recipe of ‘wine-brazed chestnut and shallots’, with the transliterated ‘*kastana stifado*’ being in small calligraphic italics right above in a muted grey, as opposed to the eye-catching blue of the translation (p. 156). With the recipes in this book following this logic in their presentation, it can be ascertained that the main audience for this book is English speakers first and Greek speakers second.

Another unique characteristic of this book is that the texts that carry Kochilas’s voice are all in italics, and in the case she uses a transliterated word, the italics are removed from it. Furthermore, the author does not go out of her way to specifically include transliterations in her personal anecdotes, with most of them forgoing them altogether. A subversion of that rule is noticed in the texts that are found at the start of every chapter, where, even though we are reading Kochilas write about her stories and knowledge, the text is plain with the italics given to the few transliterations, as is most common in other books of the genre. Another deviation found in these chapter openers is

the use of Greek itself in the form of idioms. Each chapter has an idiom that is connected with the subject matter at hand; this idiom is given to the reader in Greek, transliterated in cursive italics, translated into English, and with a meaning guide attached, in that exact order. The chapter ‘More Than Greek Salad’, for example, has the idiom ‘τα έκανες σαλάτα’ at the top in small blue lettering, with the transliterated ‘*ta ekanes salata*’ in cursive italics with a bolder shade of blue and larger lettering. Following those two and right below a leaf-themed separator, is the unlocalized translation in italics ‘*You made a salad of it*’, with the meaning in parentheses ‘(Meaning: *You made a mess of something*)’ also in italics. Which produces:

τα έκανες σαλάτα

Ta ekanes salata

‘separator’

“*You made a salad of it.*”

(Meaning: *You made a mess of something.*)

All the above factors combine to create an interesting logic surrounding the book’s linguistic ecosystem. Translation, transliteration, italics, cursive, and Greek intermingle and interchange to create what feels like an intuitive and multidimensional reading experience. In the case of the recipes, the italics are used to indicate Kochilas’s voice in the text, and make it more distinct from the colder and impersonal instructions that are given in the plain format. In the chapter opening statements, there are no instructions, so the text is given plainly, and the italics are given to the transliterations. The dish names are given translated, with importance being placed on ease of use for non-Greek-speaking readers. For the names of the dishes, transliterations are also provided, further enhancing the Greekness of the text. The use of idioms also aids greatly in familiarizing the reader with Greek terms and phrases. Naturally, the appearance of untranslated Greek text further highlights the identity not only of the text but also of the author herself.

In the way the text uses these tools, Kochilas establishes her Greek-American heritage. In this respect, the book showcases the way that languages can intermingle and create new communication norms for the people of the diasporas. However, this is not to say that the members of the Greek diaspora do not partake in the policing of language. Kochilas gives a good example of this in ‘A quick word on giant beans’ (p. 192) where she recounts:

One of my favorite bean stories involves a New York restaurant and a Greek-American New Yorker friend with enough moxie to get up and walk out when the server pronounced the gigantes appetizer ‘jee-GON-tez.’ They may as well have served moo-SA-ka, my incensed pal Valerie joked.

Truth be told, Greek cooks are partial to their gigantes (pronounced YEE-ghan-dess)

...

Within this anecdote hides the general attitude of the pronunciation-related polemics amongst many Greek people of the diaspora. But the anecdote also relates to the discussion surrounding authenticity, and the consumption of authentic or inauthentic food in a public setting. In the case of Kochilas’s friend, the mispronunciation of the word gigantes by the server challenges the validity of

her cultural identity in a formal setting. This is also explored in Abarca's approach to studying the definitions of authenticity, where the one provided by the Webster Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary dictates that in order for something to be authentic, it must be cooked with the appropriate method. In this instance, the mispronunciation of the word reduced it to something inedible, it marked a deviation from a previously set cultural pattern, and therefore caused suspicion (Abarca 3). In response to that, Kochilas's friend chooses to leave on the spot, rather than to eat what could be deemed as inauthentic by herself and the people around her. Or that was cooked by those she saw as 'not being in the know-how', since its consumption could bring down her status.

Yiayia

Who is Miari and who is Yiayia?

Anastasia Miari is a journalist, author, and brand advisor, who has established herself as a creative in the world of food writing. A child of the 90s (possibly 1996), originally born in the United Kingdom to a Greek father and British mother, she and her family moved to Corfu when she was six, and there she received her education all through middle school. After, the family moved back to the U.K., which is where she spent her teenage years, attending a British High School. She has lived a life between the two countries, spending her summers in Corfu with her parents doing seasonal work on the island, and winters in England. Consequently, she herself is bilingual, speaking both English and Greek fluently, as seen in an appearance made on ‘*The Drew Barrymore Show*’ in 2021 (The Drew Barrymore Show). In her cookbook, she even notes that ‘*yiayia*’ was her first word (p.8). Then, in 2018, after growing tired of life in London and with Brexit being imminent, she moved to Athens, working mainly as a travel and culinary journalist (LiFO.gr, 2019). She started collecting recipes from grandmothers in 2016, and this book, *Yiayia*, falls in line with one of her long-time projects called ‘*Matriarch Eats*’ on Instagram, where she cooks with and interviews grandmothers and women from across the world. *Yiayia* is her second book in this line of research, preceded by *Grand Dishes*, which came out in 2022, a year prior. In the case of *Yiayia*, she takes a closer look at women from all over Greece specifically, acting as a cultural mediator and guide to the world of Greek cuisine and food culture. She personally reaches out to people in her circle, to others through her *Matriarch Eats* account, or by calling in to tavernas and asking them if there is someone they could recommend as a cook for her projects (LiFO.gr, 2023)

Miari has lived her life in between two cultures, balancing both of her worlds and now working as a professional in both Athens and London. Having lived a big part of girlhood and womanhood in a Greek environment, she places great importance on the women of Greece and attempts to present them realistically while holding compassion for their stories. With this book, she creates an anthology of lived experiences of Greek womanhood through the recipes that are shared with her, while also discussing history and culture in a broader context in relation to food and the women who make up *Yiayia*. The book *Yiayia* was commissioned by and made in collaboration with Hardie Grant London, which produces a wide range of books, published under their Food & Drink category on June 7th, 2023 (Hardie Grant Publishing).

Yiayia; plural: yiayiades

In this book Miari travels across Greece and cooks with the ‘*yiayiades*’ or grandmothers of the country. Each woman prepares a specific dish that holds significance to them or to the region Miari has traveled to meet them. Along with each recipe, the readers are given deeper insight into each *yiayia*’s personal history through the inclusion of biographical anecdotes and photographs depicting them, their food, homes, and land. Many of the cooks reflect on their troubled past, speaking about poverty as *yiayia* Anastasia does, or marital problems in the case of *yiayia* Stamatella, or religion and fasting as discussed by *yiayia* Evangelia. War and immigration also figure in the accounts, as experienced by *yiayia* Theodora, for example. *Yiayia* Evangelia and *yiayia* Argyro comment on how life and places change over time, while *yiayia* Evridiki broaches the topic of death. Many other

topics surface, mixing and twisting with one another. Food speaks. It tells of memories, relationships, cultural histories, and personal life stories. It reflects not only who we are, but also who we were in the past and who we want to be (Long 119). The stories shared in this book often are the meanings given to these dishes by the women who cooked them. But those meanings expand from that point on and can encompass Greek identity and cuisine as a whole. Thus, stories, and in the case of *Yiayia*, the accompanying photographs, “*provide the recipes in this book with a context, a point, a reason to be*”, as Susan Leonardi puts it in her work *Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster a la Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie* (Leonardi 340).

In the back cover description, Miari is quoted as saying that “*each recipe will help you discover the real Greece, with breathtaking photographs of the landscapes and the characterful women behind beaded curtains in white-washed homes*”. This line introduces the idea that recipes, and by extension, food can serve a function of cultural mediation, immersing the foreign readers into the culture and history of Greece. In this way, the reader is also urged to develop an understanding of tradition through the recipes and reproduce that tradition through the acts of cooking and eating. Additionally, the food in this book reveals how Greek culinary culture developed and changed as it came into contact with other cultures. For example, there are many recipes in this book that echo Italian and Turkish cuisine, thus showcasing the bonds these nations have shared as neighboring peoples. While also showing the ways in which Ottoman occupation and the Venetian rule in the Ionian islands have shaped the culture and history of Greece. In this way, even though the primary function of cookbooks is not the record-keeping of events, a cookbook can be regarded not only as an instructional manual for a household task, but also as a cultural artifact that can provide historical and anthropological insights. This is attributed to the fact that cookbooks provide information about the way of life and diet of past generations, showcasing food as a cultural artifact that holds deep significance. Miari is deeply aware of this fact and uses it to create a book that transcends genre while also remaining true to its original identity and purpose.

Yiayia, then, is a cookbook that acts as a special kind of travel guide. On the one hand, Miari and her team follow the established trend of traveling across a country or region, collecting recipes and supplementing them with photographs for each location. At the same time, however, the book also presents itself as an anthropological record of the ‘yiayia’ archetype, with each yiayia being photographed and having their date and place of birth provided for the readers. She does this to keep a record of these women, of their knowledge, their stories, and recipes. Miari believes that the yiayia is an archetype still surviving in Greek society, but which will not be around for much longer: the next generation of grandmothers, she suggests, have lived and will live lives that differ greatly from the yiayia of today. She states that “*The generation succeeding my yiayia’s drive their own cars, have jobs, get manicures and make pites (pies) with ready-made filo pastry bought from the supermarket.*” (p. 8)

From this perspective, one would be tempted to examine *Yiayia* in the context of the different traditions of travel writing on Greece that have developed, especially since the 19th century. A marked trend in the earlier narratives was that of touring the country with the intent of visiting ancient monuments and famous sights, hoping to reestablish a connection with a revered and idealized ancient past. The itinerary followed might have varied, but the destinations rarely did so: Athens, Sparta, Delphi, Olympia, etc. Miari now travels to lesser-known and more remote parts of Greece, like Symi (p. 80), the village of Olympia in Karpathos (p. 124), and Trikeri (p. 164). She

visits small villages that she keeps unnamed, where the yiayia she meets with is one of only 35 inhabitants (yiayia Katina, p. 144), or even the only inhabitant (yiayia Niki, p. 180). In doing so, she allows the readers of her book to get to know Greece not through archeological sites and ruins, but through living monuments: the stories told by the women who have lived ‘the real Greece’ and are now sharing their knowledge and expertise in cooking, as well as –and perhaps most pivotally–, their lived experience.

The Exterior: a discussion of aesthetics and national branding

In line with the meaning of the book’s title, *Yiayia*, meaning grandmother, the core aesthetic of this book is rusticity. That aesthetic is evident in the cover itself, which has a white background that appears to have a rough wall-like texture, while the title, subtitle, and author’s name are in blue. What also catches the eye is an off-center photograph depicting an old woman sitting down, resting her hands over her lap, and carrying a sum of fruit in her apron. Moving to the back cover, the two pictures that were chosen illustrate what this book is about in essence. The one located on the left depicts a white and blue church built on a hill’s summit, with the sea in the background reflecting a soft light, and the one on the right shows a table full of food. Those two photographs tell the reader what this book is about equally well as its description: it’s about Greece and its food.

The colors that appear the most are white and blue, a classic combination used to underline and market the Greek-ness of the product. Evidently, *Yiayia*’s branding does not deviate from this color palette that was also noticed in the other two books being examined. Specifically in the case of Miari’s book cover, the wall-like finish of the white background references the white houses that are often found on many islands in the Aegean. The presentation of the book’s title is of interest: the designers use lower-case Greek letters to spell out “γιαγια”. However, due to the similarities in the lower-case Greek ‘γ’ and the letter ‘y’ used in the Latinized version of the word, the two words look identical, with the biggest difference possibly being the lack of dots above the ‘i’ in the Greek version and in the book’s title. This is a conscious play on words, allowing English-speaking audiences to read the word even if they have not encountered it before, and be possibly drawn to it in hopes of understanding its meaning. At the same time, it allows the Greek-speaking audiences to recognize it and be drawn to pick it up amidst the plethora of other English cookbooks. The subtitle reads “*Time-perfected Recipes from Greece’s Grandmothers*”, giving the readers who pick up the book a hint about the kind of recipes they might expect to find. An interesting detail to pay attention to here is the use of the phrase ‘time-perfected’ instead of the word traditional, which is a buzzword that is heavily used in the other two books. This is not to say that Miari avoids using the word traditional altogether in her work (the word appears, for instance, in the book’s back cover description), but it is used less comparatively to the other two books being examined in this study. Whether or not this is a conscious choice, it certainly suggests an emphasis placed on the living elements of tradition and its bearers, that is, the yiayiades.

Turning to the back cover, the readers are given some small paragraphs of text that convey what this book is about.

Celebrating traditional regional dishes, Yiayia is a collection of recipes and stories from Greece’s matriarchs across the country and its islands.

Follow Anastasia's travels through Greece as each yiayia welcomes you into their home – cook with them in their kitchen, learn their time-perfected techniques and read the memories that season the recipes within this book.

Whether you're recreating Yiayia Anna's home-made pasta from Karpathos, Yiayia Vasiliki's citrus salad from Corfu, Yiayia Eva's Tomatokeftedes (tomato fritters) from Santorini or Yiayia Eleni's Halva from Kastellorizo... each recipe will help you discover the real Greece, with breathtaking photographs of the landscape and the characterful women behind beaded curtains in white-washed homes.

Another important detail worth examination is the phrase ‘the real Greece’. Miari promises to show her readers the Greece that is real, which implies the existence of a fake or rather imaginary Greece that most people, probably tourists or foreigners in specific, perceive. This ‘fake Greece’ is the one sold to the foreign consumer as part of the nation’s branding and also the one experienced by the visitor going to the tourist hotspots that have been curated and reformed in order to garner mass appeal and popularity. Miari claims that her own aims are quite different: her cookbook is to present, and even reveal, the country that lies behind the veil of tourist idealism. Nevertheless, there is no shortage of scenic and oneiric views photographed and included in this book (p. 65, p. 82, p. 90, p. 127, p. 138, p. 145, p. 169, p. 179, p. 188) that are ‘desk-top worthy’. And even if the scenic variety of images is less common than the rustic kind, one could argue that this is just a variation of the same national branding strategy that aims to reproduce the marketed image of Greece in a different tone.

Establishing the myth of the Yiayia

Miari chooses the word yiayia for this book’s title and uses the word throughout the text systematically. By doing so, she makes a very clear point: the meaning/content of the words yiayia and grandmother is not the same. Speaking of her own yiayia, she notes that “*Grandmother is too soft of a word*” to describe her and the women like her. In short, “grandmother” is a mistranslation or misinterpretation of sorts, born out of a lack of cultural understanding. She chooses the Latinized Greek word, a word foreign to most English-speaking audiences, and then takes advantage of its unfamiliar sound to weave a new identity and engrave it in the minds of her readers. This identity does not stray from the way most Greek people view their grandmothers, or rather their ‘yiayiades’. Instead, it reinforces and highlights many of the stereotypes that are often attached to them, thereby not alienating her Greek-speaking audience. In the section ‘The Greek Matriarch’ (p.8), she establishes the yiayia as an archetype. She paints a portrait of them, both in terms of their physical appearance and in terms of their attitude and mentality:

Though they might not all be yiayiades in the sense that they have grandchildren, they are a breed of powerful matriarchs [...] They are alive and they are spirited [...] dressed in mourning black, sat behind beaded curtains in white-washed houses, hunched over in fields foraging horta (wild greens) or waiting patiently for the briki (small saucepan for making coffee) to brew a rich silty coffee [...] you can still spot the old yiayia walking back from her allotment, mantili (headscarf) wrapped around her head, atop of which is perched a basket of produce, balanced with the precision and expertise of a street performer [...] women in black that hold the secrets to

living off the land and cooking regional dishes that say more about Greece than any history book. (p. 8)

It is clear that what defines the ‘yiayiades’ is not their biological relation to other members of the family, but their social role as matriarchs, in addition to the special characteristics associated with their social function: a combination of strength and reservedness, willingness to serve, patience, and a bearer of pain and hardship. Miari places them in their societal and historical context, discussing how they lived lives under a strict patriarchal system, being hardened by wars and loss, raising and supporting their families with little to no assistance, and then helping their children through the trials of parenthood. Even still, Miari claims that it is those women who have come out of the hardships the strongest in Greek society, and who usually end up living the longest despite it all. That is to say that Miari does not regard those women as two-dimensional relics of a bygone era, reduced to an entirely romanticized image, but rather tries to approach them as figures who have actively lived through and dealt with the darkest moments of this country’s history. Miari traveled the country to cook with them and hear their stories, and as a journalist abiding by the ethical codes of her profession, she has conveyed their anecdotes with transparency. Even still, hints of romanticism and dramatization persist, slipping through the cracks of Miari’s prose. Indeed, the narrative itself appears mytho-poetic in nature, despite its claims to be grounded in reality. After all, *“myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message”* (Barthes 109).

An interesting aspect of Miari’s poetics is her choice of framing some recipes with dedications by Greek chefs who have taken the place of their grandmothers. Those are used to stress how culinary traditions are passed down from one generation to the next. We see chefs and cooks recreate the dishes their grandmothers made and tell their stories in their stead. As we recall, Miari prefaces her venture with the observation that the yiayia as we know her is slowly fading into obscurity, as the newer generations of Greek grandmothers become more and more westernized: *“The generation succeeding my yiayia’s drive their own cars, have jobs, get manicures and make pites (pies) with ready-made filo pastry bought from the supermarket”*. But is sticking to a specific way of life really what makes the ‘yiayia’ who she is?

Miari, driven by nostalgia, wishes to hold on to the image she has of the yiayia, and in her attempt, she creates her in her ideal form, turning her into a myth. In this respect, it is significant that she tries to place the authentic yiayiades in a distant and heroic past, at times dissociating them from the normal flow of time and history.

A feminist view of the yiayia

Miari dedicates this book to the yiayiades of this country, and in focusing this book entirely on those Greek women, she takes the role of a feminist ethnographer or anthropologist while scribing their stories, all the while mediating Greek culture to foreign audiences. Miari acts as a megaphone for the voices of women who have been silenced due to their gender and class. These women did not lead what would conventionally be classified as extraordinary lives. Instead, they were obliged to yield to social pressure and to conform to the ideals of womanhood that were prevalent in the past, and even today. The lives of women like the yiayia were never recorded in biographical texts, and by writing this book, Miari rejects the limited scope the genre once had. As Barbara Caine states, biographical works about women have been limited to the lives of the extraordinary and

exceptional (Caine 250), and since the yiayiades were not allowed to participate in all that could classify a person as such, they were marginalized and excluded from historical narratives. With the exception of some pioneering individuals in the feminist movements of the past, all the women who led predominantly domestic lives were seen as having no particular interest for the field. In this book, Miari does away with these old notions and instead points the focus to the women who have lived a primarily domestic life. For most of these yiayiades, the role of cook had come as a package deal with being a woman, mother, or grandmother due to societal expectations and gender norms. Miari discusses how Greek women were treated and seen by their society, noting that they controlled home affairs and raised their families while their husbands were away (p. 8). They survived not only the hardships and turbulences of the last century but also the judgement, hypocrisy, and oppression experienced under a patriarchal society, which exploited and devalued them at the same time.

With the book *Yiayia*, Miari takes the oral testimonies of women whose lives were previously seen as having taken place on the margins of history, and that were unworthy of documentation. Following the changing tides of feminist biography and history, however, Miari sees that by scribing the stories of those women, she can put on record the lived experiences of a group that has shaped culture. The yiayiades have raised and fed two, if not more generations, who can only follow in their example and hope to improve on what they were given. In regard to the culinary abilities of those women, they are second to none; however, Miari fears that the minutiae of their culinary techniques will be lost on the next generation of yiayiades, who buy ready-made filo dough and have to balance domestic, personal, and professional life.

It is also interesting to note that throughout the book, Miari capitalizes the word yiayia into 'Yiayia' when addressing each woman, attaching it almost as an epithet and placing it before each name. This gesture gives the impression that she uses it as a title of sorts, echoing the use-case of words like 'Ms.' before the name of the individual. This places great importance not only in the word, but in the role of yiayia itself, showing reverence and respect for each one of those women.

Seasonality, locality and authenticity

Miari and many of her contemporaries place great importance on the locality and seasonality of consumables. Ideally, the ingredients needed to make good food must be local and in season. In the context of this book, however, this sentiment is tied to a specific location: Greece. To make the authentic Greek food, this book and many others of its kind promise the readers that the ingredients must originate from the country itself, either because they are hard to find in other countries or because that is the key to 'maximizing' its authenticity. In relation to seasonality, Miari recounts a memory of picking fresh tomatoes from her grandmother's garden during the summers she spent with her in Corfu, which leads her to reflect that:

[...] the thought of eating a tomato in winter makes me want to cry. The recipes in this book have been collected, cooked and tested when the produce is in season. In spite of the supermarket's lingering tempting omnipresence, I hope that you'll be encouraged to seek out local, seasonal produce to make these dishes with too (p. 18)

This excerpt possibly reproduces a message that is found in many cookbooks. In her study of Slovenian cookbooks, Ana Tominc stated that a common narrative is that "*we must look back to the*

lifestyle/eating habits of our ancestors as a guide that will allow us to get healthy food that is authentic to our own locality” (Tominc 314). If that is true, however, it could possibly mean that a dish and the culture, history, and values that are attributed to it, are not as authentic if the food is made and consumed outside its place of origin, where all its components are easily accessible. That, however, makes one question the feasibility of attaining a true “taste of Greek cuisine” outside of the country. This is further complicated since, in modern day, people must go out of their way to specifically look for seasonal and organic ingredients, whereas in the times when the dishes of this book were being developed, that was the only choice available. It is also important to point out that nowadays many people, including the readers of *Yiayia*, have the ability to make a choice on what to eat based on a wider range of options available to them on a daily basis. Such a practice was perhaps inconceivable in the past, especially for the working classes. An apt example of this is the consumption of snails in the traditional Cretan dish ‘kohli bourbouristi’ (page 58). The act of preparing and eating such a dish carries different connotations depending on whether it is done out of personal choice (and might thus be a delicacy) or out of necessity. As the author herself told Conde Nast Travel, “*Like my own grandmother, they were raised in a poor nation and on little except what they could grow from the land themselves. This has influenced not only what they eat, but their entire life philosophy*” (Conde Nast Travel, Miari).

This comes to contradict many aspects of this book, written in English and therefore targeted to an English-speaking audience most likely living and cooking outside of Greece. It is not untrue to say that seasonal ingredients will make the best food, or that locality is also important when choosing where and how people purchase their food. However, many of the lesser-known recipes in this book require ingredients that would be hard to find and expensive to buy for any cook outside of Greece. Like the ship of Theseus, if one replaces some of the ingredients in a recipe, it is hard to say whether or not what is created is the same dish, and even harder to define as authentic.

Transliteration and author identity

This book, much like others of its kind, is rich in transliterations. Many of the words handled in this way are regionally specific items or terms that may lack a direct translation. However, the use of transliteration for words that could easily be translated shows a clear authorial intent in keeping those words as close to their original language as possible. One of the main goals of *Yiayia* is to represent Greek culture and heritage through those transliterations. The photographs, recipes, and anecdotes showcase the Greekness of the book and its author, but Miari chooses to additionally supplement Greek words and phrases into the text as well. These Latinized words provide a window to Greek culture in a way that photography, lore, and food do not. Therefore, transliteration in *Yiayia* is a means of mediating between the readers and the culture being presented.

In addition to transliteration, Miari also chooses to italicize the transplanted Greek words. By doing this, she makes these terms stand out amidst the rest of the text, drawing attention to their foreign origin and signifying an added level of importance. The italicization also contextualizes these words in regard to their otherness in the text; it clarifies the sound they are meant to produce as something foreign compared to the rest of the text’s language: they are supposed to be registered and conceived of differently by the reader, almost creating the feeling of an accent on a page. This is likely done to enhance the Greekness of the book, while adding variety and complexity to the reading experience. Furthermore, there is also somewhat of a self-assuring and self-pleasing aspect

of using one's own language in writing through transliteration. The author establishes her identity through the text in a way that consistently reminds the reader of her Greek origin, and perhaps satisfies a somewhat self-serving and maybe even slightly nationalistic need to have that identity showcased and acknowledged.

Rusticity and representation: examining Miari's new Greek Image

The photography that colors this book plays a key role in what it is trying to accomplish. As Roland Barthes discusses in his work *Image Music Text*, the photograph is a message without a code that acts as a “*perfect analogon of reality*” (Barthes 17). In the case of *Yiayia*, the author herself mentions that the photographs included in this book were not shot in a professional studio (p. 7). All of them are candid shots of the moments as they happened, bringing us closer to their subjects. This candid nature adds to the rustic aesthetic most of the images in this book have, being simplistic and charming in appearance. The main subject of most of those pictures is people instead of things, with the yiayiades being the most popular subject being recorded through photography. Scenic images and food photography are also present, but are less prevalent than the yiayia. This strategy aligns with the record-keeping aspect of the book as claimed by Miari, since in this way photographs are not just art, but also documents that preserve the memory of the women and their stories she is preserving. Most of the images depict the yiayiades in a setting they are familiar with, either in or around their homes and very often in their kitchens (p. 43, p. 69, p. 102). This style of presentation creates a sense of intimacy between the subject and the readers, as this book showcases an aspect of Greek daily life in an unfiltered and unedited way. In manufacturing this level of proximity, what is created is an almost ‘immersive’ experience, making the readers feel as though they too are traveling Greece and entering the homes of the Greek ‘yiayiades’. This was even established by the description of the book on the back cover that was previously discussed, where it stated:

Follow Anastasia's travels through Greece as each yiayia welcomes you into their home – cook with them in their kitchen, learn their time-perfected techniques and read the memories that season the recipes within this book.

Many of the recipes included in this book are less popular and more obscure for non-Greek audiences. Some of the dishes lack mass appeal and, as such, will not be found in the menu of a touristy taverna. They are also mostly traditional and niche, in line with the record-keeping aspect of the book, and are not as personal to Miari as something one can find in *My Greek Table* by Kochilas. These choices seem to be a conscious one, and in following this tactic, *Yiayia* differentiates itself from other books about Greek cookery. However, this does not mean that the book excludes many of the dishes that are considered to be Greek ‘classics’ by the foreign masses, like tzatziki (p. 25) and village or Greek salad (p. 76). But a prime example of a dish that is usually unseen by the foreign consumer is the ‘magirio’ (a summer vegetable stew), found on pages 114 and 115. Although it is a staple in many homes of the Aegean, its visual appearance is not appealing enough for a restaurant or a taverna setting. And yet, Miari chooses to present it as is, with no effort to alter its presentation through styling techniques in order to make it more appetizing or palatable to the more critical eyes of foreign readers. Namely, the photograph on page 115 shows a plate full of vegetables stripped of their vibrancy and shape by the boiling process, and having been plated seemingly without much thought or care for symmetry. Roland Barthes, in his 1957 work *Mythologies*, noted that sight is a “genteel sense” that often prefers things to be glazed over and

beautified (Barthes, 78), and many cookery books or food publications follow this idea. This is done by making sure that food and its presentation are in accordance with the standards of mass social appeal, presenting it ‘glazed’, ornamented, and thoroughly edited to soften aspects of food that are seen as distasteful. A similar logic is often followed in strategies of national branding, since photography plays a key role in the reproduction of this branding. *Yiayia* itself also includes many photographs that depict Greece through this lens. A characteristic example of this is the photograph on page 138 and on the book’s exterior, which depicts a winding path leading to a church with white walls and a blue dome in the distance, with the sea in the background. Miari, then, seems to be combining different strategies in order to make the book appealing to a wide audience, while at the same time, staying true to her claim to authenticity and goal of honest record-keeping.

The rustic aspects and lack of glazing are aesthetic choices Miari makes in an attempt to defy the readers’ expectations, and to challenge the stereotypical national branding most of them are familiar with. Perhaps this is what she means when she states that through this book, the readers will get to discover the “real Greece”. However, this does not mean that the subject matter of each photograph is chosen haphazardly. Instead, it is the perceived “abruptness” of photographs like the one found on page 115 that helps Miari paint a new narrative for Greekness. This is done in an attempt to replace the old brand narrative of Greece as a picture-perfect paradise with an image that is showing signs of wear. Miari’s new narrative attempts to project an image of reality, drawing its charm from the very notion of authenticity and of a tradition that reflects the country’s history and struggle. Hence, the “real Greece” through Miari’s eyes is the Greece one discovers through the women, dishes, stories, and photographs that are characterized by rusticity.

However, this book is not without flaws in its attempt to represent modern Greece. One could argue, for example, that the rusticity that characterizes it can only be an aesthetic novelty for the jaded middle and upper class, who may find themselves reaching for something unfamiliar on a whim, and who are able to pay the 28 to 34 euro price tag on a cookbook they do not need. For most of the women in Miari’s book, however, rusticity is not an aesthetic choice but rather a living condition that has been romanticized by this book to an extent. The new narrative proposed by Miari in *Yiayia* is still only that: a well-crafted narrative regarding the lives of a selected sample of the Greek population. It still fails to paint the full picture. Perhaps in including scenic views in a book of otherwise rustic character, Miari attempts to showcase how Greece, and by extension other countries, can be multifaceted.

When in Greece, eat as the Romans do!

A recurrent theme with many of the recipes included in this book is the influence Italian gastronomy has had on Greek cooking. This is in major part due to the greater focus given to Corfu, where Miari has spent much of her life with her yiayia, and where Italian cooking has had a great influence. The fusion of Italian and Greek cuisine in Corfu is a result not only of geographical proximity but also of Venetian colonialism. Both of these aspects have allowed Italian cooking to greatly influence not only the island itself but also the rest of Greece as well. An example of this phenomenon is the dish ‘pastitsada’, which can be found on page 150. What was originally an Italian dish was brought over to the island of Corfu by the Venetians and became a staple in the local culture, and was even integrated into the traditions of the island. A close examination could reveal more key insights.

Pastitsada is my all-time favourite dish. It nods to my island's geographical proximity to Italy. You can see the southern roots of Puglia from Corfu's most north-western tip. It makes sense then, that this dish has its roots in Italy. Originally known as pastissada de caval (on account of it being made with horse meat once upon a time) the dish was brought to Corfu by the Venetians in the 1400s

There are a few elements to note in this passage. The first thing that stands out is the use of the first person by Miari (“my all-time favourite dish” and “my island’s”). This is something practiced throughout the book as a whole, where Miari establishes her identity and personhood, all while placing herself as the clear and indisputable narrator of the text. In this passage specifically, she uses the first person to re-affirm her Corfiot background. Further down, she establishes the closeness between Corfu and Italy by painting an image that illustrates exactly how close the two land masses are geographically, and then goes on to give some historical context for the dish. In this way, Miari draws a line connecting these two cultures through this dish, but underplays the role of colonial politics in the process of cultural evolution. Thereby, the text creates the impression that Greece and Italy took part in a simple cultural exchange as a result of their closeness, even though the reality was certainly more complex than that. This is interesting to note since there are also plenty of recipes with Turkish influence, which are handled with a more careful approach, as will be seen later.

I make it with Yiayia Evangelia, who's from the famous Lavranos family of butchers on the island. Very much on island time, she doesn't sweat that it's 11 p.m. before we have a chance to taste this incredible dish. She regales me with stories of Corfu of olds and fills me with ripe figs. She waves me off with a bucket full of waxy aubergines (eggplants) and bulbous tomatoes to take home to my own yiayia

In this section, Miari shortly introduces the yiayia of this recipe, Evangelia. She describes her as a laid-back and friendly woman, providing her with fresh produce. In doing this she also creates an image of Corfiot society as having a strong sense of community, with the yiayiades specifically having an eye out for one another and participating in impromptu gift-exchanging rituals.

Corfiots like to overcook their pasta, but I'd advise eating the bucatini al dente and topping this off with a great big slab of feta. It's the ultimate show-off dish. Serve with a simple tomato and cucumber salad

Here Miari gives insight into the ways Greek cooks have altered the dish to fit in with their preferences. She states that most people in Corfu, and indeed in the country as a whole, do not serve their pasta al dente. She also introduces feta to the dish, something that the original recipe surely does not ask for. In this way, the readers are shown some fine details about the way dishes like this one have evolved and changed after being brought over, with more Greek elements being added over time, creating the Greco-Italian fusion cuisine of the island.

Yiayia Evangelia, in her biographical anecdote, speaks about her love story with her husband and then about the state of her marriage. Notably, she says that “In marriage it's important to have balance. The man sometimes wants it his way but no, that is not the way we do in my house. I have as much of a say as he does”. This statement supports the description Miari has given of the Yiayia as a headstrong and independent woman. Regarding this dish, yiayia Evangelia gives some cultural

insight, mentioning that traditionally this dish is eaten on the 15th of August in Corfu to celebrate the Assumption of Mary.

There is no shortage of dishes clearly influenced by Italian cuisine in the book, not only from Corfu, which is nearest in proximity to the Italian peninsula, but from all over Greece. In the realm of desserts for example one such recipe is yiayia Liza's pasta frolla in page 242. Originally being a shortcrust pastry, it moved to Greece, and the meaning changed to be the title given to any jam tart. Along with the meaning, the word changed as well, and now for most of the Greek mainland, this dish is most commonly referred to as pasta flora instead of pasta frolla.

Drinking coffee together on the border

In the chapter dedicated to deserts, the first recipe that is written about is the one for 'Greek' coffee, with Miari including the quotation in the word Greek. This recipe is given to us by yiayia Maria, an inhabitant of Kastellorizo, which is a tiny island off the coast of Turkey. With this recipe, Miari opens a discussion around the cultural ownership of food, allowing yiayia Maria to give more insight based on her lived experience. A close reading could be of great use here.

I spot Yiayia Maria sweeping up outside her son's restaurant on Kastellorizo's harbour on a hot May morning. She's tiny and very frail but absolutely will not accept any help when I offer it. Neither will she let me go to the bakery for her (she's on her way there after doing the morning clean up)

This passage once again highlights the main characteristics that Miari has found in the archetypal yiayia. Echoing the mythology Miari created on page 8.

Despite the notorious Greek-Turkish tensions that have developed since the great population exchange of 1918, Yiayia Maria surprises me with the warmth she shows towards her neighbours on the Turkish mainland, just a mile away from Kastellorizo. She slowly brews me a rich Greek coffee and indulges me with her stories, as well as the ultimate recipe for our most loved morning pick-me-up

In this section, Miari makes mention of an event that has created or may have extended what most perceive as one of the world's ultimate feuds, the one between the Greek and Turkish people. However, by choosing yiayia Maria and allowing her to share her story and viewpoint, she shows her readers that Greek and Turkish people are not monoliths acting out an eternal vendetta, but two groups of people with many similarities that unite them, and who can live side by side, more on this later.

As well as finely ground Greek coffee, you'll need a copper briki pot with a long handle to make one of these.

Some essential rules from Yiayia Maria:

Always, always, always brew the coffee over an open flame.

If you're making a mono (a single coffee for one), use a smaller briki. If you're making a diplo (a double) or coffee for two, you'll need a larger size.

Don't stir the coffee while it's on the heat because this stops it frothing and ultimately the froth, or kaymaki, is what lends the coffee the distinct, rich flavour.

Here, Miari, or rather yiayia Maria, gives some tips for making the beverage. This section is reminiscent of the way *My Greek Taverna* handled the terminology for coffee, where the terms that are transliterated are italicized (“*mono*”, “*diplo*” and “*glykos*”, words which are used in the instructions of the recipe), with the exception of the word for briki here, which Miari chooses to leave as is, assuming that her readers are already familiar with it, after having used it in earlier in the book (p 8). In both of those books, Greek terminology is handled in much the same way, and both have the same effects as mentioned in a previous section.

On page 189, yiayia Maria provides a very insightful anecdote, speaking on her life and view of Greco-Turkish interpersonal relations.

‘What’s the difference between a Greek coffee and a Turkish one? Nothing. It’s all the same. It’s a bit like people. Some call themselves Greek, others say they’re Turkish, but in the end, there aren’t any differences at all. Before there was ‘Greece’ and ‘Turkey’, we all used to live alongside each other. We have the mosque here in Kastellorizo and when my mother was a girl, a whole section of our population was Muslim. Then after the First World War things began to change and before I was born, most of the Muslims living among us had left to go over to the Turkish mainland.

As yiayia Maria states, there truly is no key difference in the coffee drank by both people, as the flavor and preparation of this beverage are one and the same for both. Despite that, however, both populations have the tendency to trademark the drink by adding either “Greek” or “Turkish” to the name, in an attempt to obliterate this commonality. In protest against this gesture, yiayia Maria follows up this statement by adding that, similarly to their beloved coffee, Greek and Turkish people are one and the same (“*It’s a bit like people. Some call themselves Greek, others say they’re Turkish, but in the end, there aren’t any differences at all*”). Maria’s testimony also explains that before the manufactured division and separation of the two populations by their respective governments and World War I, there were those who were able to cohabitate, even on an island as small as Kastellorizo. This section goes to prove that this book is much more than what it may seem on the surface, being not only a cookbook about Miari’s travels in Greece but also a collection of historic and cultural insights from a group of women who were deemed ‘not relevant enough’ for the history books, but who hold a wealth of information.

As Miari puts it when discussing the use of syrup on page 18, “*we Greeks were previously Ottoman*”, and as a result of those few centuries of Ottoman rule, there has been an extensive cultural exchange between the two populations. This goes beyond just coffee and is also greatly felt in the world of gastronomic tradition in general, being most easily recognizable in the type of desserts eaten by Greek and Turkish people. Anyone living in Turkey or any other “previously Ottoman” country like Greece, will easily recognize things like baklava, rizogalo/firim sutlac, and halva, just to name a few.

We Kastellorizans never had problems with our neighbours across the water. It was the Germans that bombed us and the Second World War that made refugees of us. We were forced to abandon Kastellorizo when its population had reached over 15,000 residents. Now there is less than 500 of us left. It was too dangerous for us to live

here during the Second World War so we fled east, to Palestine, where we lived for four years in tents.

Even after the war, we kept good relations with those opposite us on the Turkish mainland. We would go shopping for groceries over there every Friday and if anyone was ever in need of a good doctor, it was to Turkey that they would go. They were always welcomed with open arms. It is politics that gets in the way of human friendships. My own husband was sent to prison for taking coffee to Turkey when it wasn't allowed. For centuries, trade had passed between us but suddenly, there were laws restricting that, and my husband was sent to prison for four years.

They've parked a warship on our little harbour and the army's fighter jets fly over every now and then, but when there's a wedding, we're all invited over to enjoy the festivities with our Turkish friends. They also come over for Easter. When my husband died, they brought 17 wreaths over to lay on his grave. Greek or Turkish, it's the same blood that runs through all our veins'

Yiayia Maria goes on to further explain some of the minutiae of the Turko-Greek relationship and how it functions in the frontier island of Kastellorizo, as well as a historical testimony based on her own experience and knowledge. With the inclusion of anecdotes, the book here makes a statement regarding the dynamic between the two countries, which is often seen as tumultuous. Going against the popular narrative, it showcases that the reality is much more complex in practice, and that taking a closer look at the people and small communities that interact in points where contact is or was less regulated and militarized reveals that Greek and Turkish people are more than able to get along. It could be argued that this is a form of diplomacy taking place in the confines of this cookbook, with coffee as a key factor. Yiayia Maria states explicitly that coffee is a trade product that both sides equally enjoy, even stating that the way it is made is one and the same across the border. She additionally makes a small statement regarding the regulation of trade that took place in the past, preventing the two peoples from co-operation, interaction, and exchange, as well as how going against that law had severe consequences of trespasses (*"My own husband was sent to prison for taking coffee to Turkey when it wasn't allowed"*). She also points out that the island has become militarized (*"They've parked a warship on our little harbour and the army's fighter jets fly over every now and then"*) and explains that it is political interests that force a divide between the two peoples. Nevertheless, she persists in sharing stories that emphasize how, despite those factors, camaraderie and cultural exchange (wreath giving, weddings, Easter celebrations) still flourish among the two communities.

This could be a case of culinary diplomacy taking place. As defined by Muhammad Abdulgaffar and Kaldygul Adilbekova (431), culinary diplomacy is a form of diplomacy that uses food as its language to establish cross-cultural connections, foster global understanding, assist in conflict resolution, and promote economic cooperation. It acts as a cultural bridge, facilitating dialogue and mutual appreciation. In the case of *Yiayia*, the reader is pointed to coffee as a unique factor that could tie the Greek and Turkish communities together, highlighting the appreciation that those two peoples share for this common cultural artifact. At the same time, the narrative serves as a criticism of the current state of affairs in the foreign policy and border control enacted by the two states. Although this book focuses on Greek cooking and culture, it also highlights the aspects of Greek

gastronomy and tradition that have come from neighboring nations as well as the immigrants that have come to make a life in this country (Yiayia Feyrouz p. 46 – 49, Yiayia Lily p. 174 – 177). Food in Greece was greatly impacted by the Venetians, the Ottomans, the Greek populations that migrated from Anatolia, and nowadays by immigrants from Turkey, Albania, or even Ireland. All those people have made great contributions to the culinary culture and history of this nation. This book includes their stories because these women are also yiayiades in equal measure. This too, is culinary diplomacy.

Comparative Analysis

The three cookbooks selected for this study, *Yiayia*, *My Greek Taverna*, and *My Greek Table*, provide an interesting basis for analyzing the representation of Greek heritage and culinary culture in the genre. Each one follows a different approach depending on the identity of the author, as well as their target audience.

The cookbook *Yiayia* is the product of individual passion undertaken by a journalist who was raised in two very different worlds, Greece and Britain. As a result of this cross-cultural upbringing, Miari has formed an identity that could be called ‘semi-diasporic’, having been influenced greatly by both cultures. Her book creates a sense of nostalgia through its photography, aesthetics, and language. In doing this, Miari draws in the readers from the diaspora as well as native Greek people. In *Yiayia*, she depicts the Greece of ‘the good old days’, almost like the country itself is a yiayia, in all her rusticity and humility. In this book, Miari explores the country’s history and creates an anthropological anthology of recipes, people, and places.

An alternative view is presented by Pavlaki and Georgiadis, two native Greeks, who understand the image Greece has in the eyes of the foreign tourists who visit it. In their book, *My Greek Taverna*, Greek culinary culture and heritage are depicted as something consumable and essentialized, something a tourist can pick up and take with them in the form of a cookbook, a souvenir. They represent it as a sunny, summery seaside vacation, a desirable cliché that many tourists will flock to. This book presents an opportunity to examine the tourism industry and its relationship to food. Under the effects of which, Greek culture is commodified and restricted into a narrow image. Even still, however, Pavlaki and Georgiadis are able to abide by this branding while also having some valuable discussions and insights, such as the one regarding coffee.

The last book selected, *My Greek Table*, is the creation of Diane Kochilas, who is a Greek-American chef and author. Kochilas has worked in both the United States and Greece, and is famous in both countries for her cooking. *My Greek Table* is a book adaptation of one of her shows that was aired in America, and it is likely that she wrote this cookbook primarily for that audience. Home-cooks of Non-Greek American heritage and Greeks of the diaspora, who are looking to eat healthy, modernized/Americanized, and approachable Greek food. The Greece depicted in *My Greek Table* becomes an idealized land. Heavily praised for its ancient heritage, but distanced from its modern history. She overlooks the foreign influences that changed its culinary culture in the last few centuries, failing to mention or overlooking the multicultural history of dishes like baklava, dolmades, and coffee. But despite that, Kochilas is unafraid to experiment and innovate with her cooking, bringing in fusion gastronomy and not sticking with food that is traditional, like the other two books.

In these three books, the narrative of Greek-ness is crafted using tools the authors have available, with overlaps due to genre, as they are all cookbooks, and differentiations due to theme (taverna food, modern and fusion cooking, food and anthropology). In this respect, aesthetics, photography, and narrative can be seen to both converge and to diverge, adjusted as they are to the general principles and goals of each book. The latter also determine the way the authors handle themes of authenticity, cultural identity (including the authors’ own identity), heritage, nation branding, the extent to which their works display orientalist tendencies, and the cultural mediation strategies they employ, including translation and transliteration.

In regard to aesthetics, all of these books use similar branding. All three follow similar aesthetic patterns in text, color, and image. Each one of these authors likes to enrich their texts with italics and transliterations, with *Yiayia* and *My Greek Taverna* using similar ways of application. On *My Greek Table*, the rules as to what gets ‘flavored’ with italics are looser, and transliteration is less common. On the side of color, white and blue are the most present both externally and internally in all three. The synonymity these two colors have with the national brand makes these products as visibly Greek as possible. As it pertains to photography, there are more commonalities than not in these three books. All three choose to highlight the natural beauty and scenery of Greece, with Miari and, to a slightly lesser extent, Kochilas, having an eye for a more rustic look. Miari also includes a myriad of photographs dedicated to the yiayiades, whereas in Kochilas’s book, there is very little human presence. Pavlaki and Georgiadis share that trait with Kochilas, since in their few scenic images, there are no human beings to be found. In their book, those two focus more on the food photography rather than on the scenery, with each dish being methodically shot. The images of all three books are seemingly taken in summer or spring, matching the aesthetic vision most tourists will have of Greece, in line with the nation brand.

The word authenticity is used in the branding of all three books; this signifies that readers are actively looking for what is deemed to be authentic. In *My Greek Taverna*, the dishes being presented are indeed authentic to what a taverna might offer, and the inclusion of some less obvious choices for a book with such a strict theme is also noted. Such dishes, mostly found in the ‘Legumes and Olive Oil-Based Dishes’ chapter (Lentil Soup p. 92, White bean soup p. 94), provide a more realistic variety of dishes seen in Greek homes. However, the authors do not represent Greece itself authentically; they describe it as the perfect vacation paradise and limit the readers’ scope to sun and sand tourism. On the other hand, Miari in *Yiayia* presents a very realistic and unfiltered look into Greece and its food. She achieves this with the anecdotes shared by the yiayiades, which are pools of information regarding not only culture but also history, Greek society, gender, class, age, and a myriad of other topics. Then, Kochilas in *My Greek Taverna* is authentic in her cooking, which is influenced by her diasporic identity. Regarding Greece itself, however, she presents a sanitized image. By highlighting and showing reverence most prominently for the ancient past, she leaves little room for discussions relating to more modern events that were influential, gastronomically or culturally.

In the realm of cultural identity and heritage, however, the three approaches differ greatly. Firstly, Miari and Kochilas are both Greek women of the diaspora. Miari would often come to Greece as a child, spending time in the country during her formative years. Kochilas grew up in New York and then started working in both the United States and Greece in her adulthood, dividing her time between both locations. In *Yiayia*, Miari highlights her Corfiot roots, but will scarcely mention her English heritage. This is, of course, in big part due to the fact that this book is not a book about her, as much as it is about the yiayiades. Kochilas, on the other hand, showcases how her diasporic identity has shaped her cooking habits. She brings modernized and Americanized versions of many classic Greek dishes, as well as introducing a new fusion style in Grec-Mex. Interestingly, in *My Greek Taverna* authors’ personal identities are downplayed and almost absent from the narrative. This, in combination with the lack of human presence in the photography included in this book, leaves the impression that Greekness in this book is an aesthetic more than it is an identity. Naturally, all authors discuss Greek culture and heritage at large, that is they do not

limit themselves to their personal experiences. In this case, Miari presents it through the yiayiades as a collective. She presents Greek-ness through their eyes and lived experiences, limited as a category, but one that has often been overlooked in the greater Greek narrative. On the other hand, Kochilas presents Greek-ness as a fluid identity adapting to the demands of the modern world. Showcasing the capacity of cultures to mix and create new identities. Lastly, perhaps Pavlaki and Georgiadis present Greekness through the eyes of the tourist. Greekness more as attraction and less an identity, the backdrop to a summer holiday.

As previously mentioned, the three cookbooks being studied all make use of transliterations in their texts. Across the board, this technique is used to signify the Greekness of a word and contextualize its foreign nature. In *Yiayia*, Miari makes the choice to include as many transliterations as possible, while always providing the meaning behind the word when needed. Miari presents these words in italics, making them stand out. In *My Greek Taverna*, the authors most commonly make use of transliterated words in the names of the food, which are always accompanied by the Greek and the translated forms for each dish. Lastly, Kochilas's use of them is similarly limited; when her text is in italics as a whole, these words are presented in upright form and vice versa. It is clear that in all cases the authors wish to underscore or bring attention to the Greek language, and maybe their own Greekness through it even more so.

In the case of the nation brand being showcased with these books, a few things are made evident. All four authors make use of the image Greece has in the eyes of the world as a way to market their product. The covers of all three books make the national brand easy to perceive even at first glance; blue and white are consistent in all three exteriors. Additionally, two of the books use the word Greek itself in their titles (*My Greek Taverna*, *My Greek Table*), and the third, *Yiayia*, is the Latinized version of a Greek word. That is to say that all three books are made to appear as Greek as possible, and their loud Greekness is not only a key theme but also a major component of their branding.

Exoticism, Orientalism, romanticization, and essentialization also play a role in many of the strategies used for book branding. In the case of *My Greek Taverna*, the Greece being presented by the authors is highly exoticised, reduced to a vacation spot, with its only noticeable characteristics being the sun, sand, and beach. Similarly, Kochilas presents an idealized Greece. In *My Greek Table*, the country's history and culture are edited by Kochilas; this then leads to the romanticization of the ancient past, while the country's Ottoman and post-Ottoman history are mostly neglected if not concealed. As a result, Kochilas struggles to present Greek history in a nuanced way, even misleading her readers at some point in the process. On the other hand, Miari's presentation of Greece, although slightly romanticized in some aspects, has a more multi-dimensional approach. Through the oral testimonies provided by the yiayiades, Greek history and culture are presented in a more straightforward manner. In *Yiayia*, Greece is much more than a 'seaside vacation for museum lovers', but a society that has been marred by war, patriarchy, and political tensions.

Conclusions

Through the examination of these works and the discourses presented by their authors, several ideas have emerged. First, the cookbook genre is rich in study material for a wide variety of fields, offering significant insights into the culture of its time and the people who created it. For this reason, this thesis argues that cookbooks are much more than instructional manuals, and indeed, they can be about a lot more than just cooking.

From this perspective, they are viewed as being valuable artifacts that showcase the evolution of culture as well as established traditions. Such an idea was proven by all three cookbooks discussed in this paper. *My Greek Table* illustrates with every page how culture shifts as it moves through the world, being shaped by newly neighboring cultures in zones of contact, which create space for new hybrid identities and fusion foods. On the other hand, *My Greek Taverna* and *Yiayia* provide a view of Greek tradition showcased through its culinary culture, with the latter providing profound insights about how the gastronomy of this country evolved. Throughout the examination of these books, it becomes evident that they can reproduce the national brand and act as diplomatic tools, promoting the country and examining the multiculturalism of food. This is especially evident in *My Greek Taverna*, which is a tourist product, and as such is an advertisement for the county's vacation-worthy assets, with Greek food naturally being the main focus. In regard to multiculturalism, *Yiayia* and *My Greek Table* take the cake as it were. Kochilas includes a wide variety of Americanized and fusion dishes, with Grec-Mex taking the spotlight in my examination. All the while, the former explores the deep bonds Greek culinary tradition share with its neighbors to the East and to the West. Miari showcases Italian and Turkish influence while holding nuanced discussions regarding the ownership polemics of food. There is a case for cookbooks to be viewed as tools for the mediation of culture, something seen in all three, and as a tool for establishing cross-cultural bonds. For Kochilas, a celebrity chef of Greek descent, heralded as the ambassador for Greek cuisine for her primarily American audience, her role as a mediator is clear in this book. She is their image of diasporic Greekness; she embodies this identity through her work and uses it as her branding. At the same time, by including her Grec-Mex recipes, she showcases the closeness that can develop between two cultures through gastronomy. Additionally, Miari's *Yiayia*, and to a lesser extent *My Greek Taverna*, engage in gastrodiploacy through their discussions about coffee. Particularly in *Yiayia* we encounter powerful statements that highlight the friendship Greek and Turkish people can have. Lastly, cookbooks can also be examined as travel guides and anthropological projects. Both Kochilas and Miari travel the country, metaphorically through the dishes they share, and physically as they journey through Greece in search of recipes, all while including pictures of different locations during their journey. Miari also takes on the role of a feminist anthologist, recording not only places but also the yiayiades she encounters and cooks with. Pavalaki and Georgiadis, on the other hand, guide the visitors of Greece through the foods they may encounter at a taverna or restaurant setting, while also including some less popular staples. All these parameters are only a humble few from the possible discourses that can come from the examination of this genre.

In these books, we come to understand that food holds cultural significance as well as emotional value for the authors. Food is the physical manifestation of culture. Through the recipes included in all three cookbooks, Greek heritage becomes something the readers can see, feel, taste, smell, and

even hear through the act of following these recipes, by cooking and consuming the food. However, the authors do not simply provide a list of ingredients and instructions; each recipe comes with its own personal text. Miari talks about her upbringing in Corfu and her journey through Greece with each recipe; she also includes profoundly personal anecdotes from each yiayia she meets and interviews. Kochilas speaks about her experiences as a chef and shares knowledge that came from study and personal experience. Throughout her book, she discusses the history of food in Greece and the stories behind the development of her new and unique interpretations of traditional Greek food. Pavlaki and Georgiadis provide a less personal book, but display an appreciation for the taverna, describing it with high praise. Food, therefore, is not just deeply connected to culture, but to memories as well, giving each dish emotional significance.

A recurring element in all three cookbooks is the notion of authenticity. It is used as a marketing tool, usually to qualify the recipes or modes of preparation and consumption. This idea of authenticity, however, is undermined by the very variety of the recipes sharing the same label of Greekness. Authenticity, it would seem, is potentially too limiting of a concept for an ever-evolving and ever-changing art form like that of cooking. Culture is not stagnant; it changes over time, and when it comes into contact with other cultures, it absorbs many of their elements. As for cooking, culture's physical manifestation, this will also hold true and become easily apparent. For as we see in these books, tradition and fusion can be presented as equally authentic forms of food; tsoureki and tsoureki French toast, for example, stay true to the identities of their cooks. However, when studying products marketed as such, cultural fluidity is a necessary parameter to take into account.

In discussing cultural fluidity, the Greekness presented in all three books varies drastically, as all forms of identity tend to do. This Greekness is reproduced differently in these texts, a representation that stems from each author's personal identity, as well as the target group meant to consume their work. In *My Greek Taverna*, Pavlaki and Georgiadis present Greekness to their tourist audience through the lens of tourist-centric idealism. In this case, heritage and culture are treated as commodities meant to appeal to the foreign consumer. Kochilas in *My Greek Table*, on the other hand, displays Greek identity in diaspora as a dualistic reinvention. Her readers are being shown the modern Greek diaspora through the hybridity and fusion that characterizes most of her dishes. But in addition to that, they are also shown Greekness through the glorification of ancient heritage through her texts. On the other hand, Miari's *Yiayia* connects Greekness displayed by the yiayiades with nostalgia and an ambivalence to change, as the unique identity of the yiayia is being lost as the modernized next generation takes the mantle and the title. These different approaches show that there is no monolith for the Greek identity; it is not a one-size-fits-all.

Additionally, it is important to point out the fact that there is much more to discuss with these texts and with cookbooks in general. This study examined these books with specialized interests in mind, and as a result, it could be narrow in its scope and analysis. There is always room for more exploration, not only of the themes that have been discussed in the above sections, or in the inspection of these books in particular, but also beyond their scopes of relevance and in conjunction with different fields of study. History, anthropology, ethnography, post-colonial studies, literature studies, critical race theory, and many more have a lot to gain by delving into this genre critically.

Finally, I wish to echo some sentiments I share with other researchers and students who have studied this genre. Cookbooks are vastly underrepresented in all fields as a topic of discussion and

academic research. As a household item that falls outside the realm of high art or literary canons, at least as they are measured in academic circles, these texts have been sidelined and undervalued, seen only for their practical purpose. This includes the fields of discourse analysis and intercultural studies, where these texts have not been given proper attention. I strongly believe that this should, and eventually will, change. I would thus urge more researchers to turn to cookbooks and study them. At worst, they will learn how to cook some tasty food.

Bibliography

- Abarca, Meredith E. "Authentic or not, it's original." *Food & Foodways* 12.1 (2004): 1-25.
- "About Diane." *dianekochilas.com*, Diane Kochilas, <https://www.dianekochilas.com/about-diane/>. Accessed 11 September 2025
- Aspraki, Gabriella. "Tradition as development strategy." *Cultural Heritages as Reflexive Traditions*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2007. 34-54.
- Barthes, Roland. *Image Music Text*. The Noonday Press, 1977
- Barthes, Rorald. *Mythologies*. Hill and Wang, 1957
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
- Caine, Barbara. "Feminist biography and feminist history." *Women's History Review* 3.2 (1994): 247-261.
- "Diane Kochilas – Muse of the Mediterranean Diet and the Greek Way of Life." *thehellenicinitiative.org*, The Hellenic Initiative – Global, 4 June 2021, <https://thehellenicinitiative.org/other-thi-news/diane-kochilas-muse-of-the-mediterranean-diet-and-the-greek-way-of-life/>. Accessed 11 September 2025.
- Duruz, Jean. "The Travels of Kitty's Love Cake: A Tale of Spices, "Asian" Flavors, and Cuisine Sans Frontières?." *The Globalization of Asian Cuisines: Transnational Networks and Culinary Contact Zones*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015. 37-56.
- "Full Exclusive Interview with Diane Kochilas." *KLCS Public Media*, PBS, 2025 copyright, <https://klcs.org/full-exclusive-interview-with-diane-kochilas/>. Accessed 11 September 2025.
- Grigoriadou, Sofia. "'Béchamel': The Taste of Public Memory, Forgetting and Discipline in Athens and Skopje. An Approach Between Art and Anthropology." *Balkanologie. Revue d'études pluridisciplinaires* 19.2 (2024).
- Guiné, Raquel PF, et al. "The duality of innovation and food development versus purely traditional foods." *Trends in food science & technology* 109 (2021): 16-24.
- Hauser-Schäublin, Brigitta, and Lyndel V. Prott. "Cultural Property and Contested Ownership." *The Trafficking of Artefacts and the Quest for Restitution*. London (2017).
- Hulot, M. "Αναστασία Μίαρη: «Οι Ελληνίδες γιαγιάδες είναι γυναίκες δυνατές και ατρόμητες»." *LiFO.gr*, 25 May 2023, www.lifo.gr/culture/vivlio/anastasia-miari-oi-ellinides-giagiades-einai-gynaikes-dynates-kai-atromites. Accessed 11 September 2025.
- Jordana, Jorge. "Traditional foods: challenges facing the European food industry." *Food Research International* 33.3-4 (2000): 147-152.
- Kochilas, Diane. *My Greek Table*. St. Martins Griffin, 2018

- Kokkini, M. "Η Αναστασία Μιάρη ταξιδεύει για να μαγειρέψει με γιαγιάδες απ' όλο τον κόσμο" *LiFO.gr*, 11 May 2019, <https://www.lifo.gr/tropos-zois/fashion/i-anastasia-miari-taxideyei-gia-na-mageirepsei-me-giagiades-ap-olo-ton-kosmo>. Accessed 11 September 2025
- Leonardi, Susan J. "Recipes for reading: Summer pasta, lobster à la Riseholme, and key lime pie." *pmla* 104.3 (1989): 340-347.
- Lévi Strauss, C. *The Origin of Table Manners*, Harper Collins Publishers, 1978, p. 471
- Li, Mu. "Performative Chineseness and culinary tourism in Chinese restaurants in Newfoundland, Canada." *Folklore* 131.3 (2020): 268-291
- Long, Lucy M. "Learning to listen to the food voice: recipes as expressions of identity and carriers of memory." *Food, Culture & Society* 7.1 (2004): 118-122.
- Miari, Anastasia. "Lessons on Longevity and Wellbeing From Greece's Yiayias." *Condé Nast Traveler*, 30 May 2023, www.cntraveler.com/story/lessons-on-longevity-and-wellbeing-from-greeces-yiayias. Accessed 13 September 2025
- Miari, Anastasia. *Yiayia*. Hardie Grant Publishing, 2023
- Mitsi, Efterpi and Kolocotroni, Vassiliki. (2008). *Women Writing Greece Essays on Hellenism, Orientalism and Travel*. 10.1163/9789401206440
- Muhammad, Abdulgaffar, and Kaldygul Adilbekova. "Culinary diplomacy: unveiling the palate as a pathway to stronger international relations." *Uluslararası Sosyoloji ve Ekonomi Dergisi* 5.2 (2023): 431-449.
- Örs, İlay Romain. "Culinary Complexities in Turkey and Greece: On Food, Nation, and Identity in the Aegean." *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 42.2 (2024): 225-256.
- Pavlaki, Ioanna and Georgiadis, Gerasimos. *My Greek Taverna*. Pedio Publishing S. A., 2018 (2023 version)
- Pavlaki, Ioanna. "Ioanna Pavlaki." *LinkedIn*, 2025 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ioanna-pavlaki-7292a330/>. Accessed 13 September 2025
- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone." *Profession*, 1991, pp. 33–40. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25595469>. Accessed 7 Sept. 2025.
- Richards, Greg. "Gastronomy: an essential ingredient in tourism production and consumption?." *Tourism and gastronomy*. Routledge, 2003. 17-34.
- Suntikul, Wantanee. "Gastrodiplomacy in tourism." *Current Issues in Tourism* 22.9 (2019): 1076-1094.
- Said, Edward W. "Orientalism." *The Georgia Review* 31.1 (1977): 162-206.
- The Drew Barrymore Show. "Jessica Alba and Drew Learn How to Make Delicious Veggies with Tzatziki Dip | #Grandgoals." *YouTube*, 7 May 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3BbsNIldVA. Accessed 11 September 2025.

Tominc, Ana. "Tolstoy in a recipe: Globalisation and cookbook discourse in postmodernity." *Nutrition & Food Science* 44.4 (2014): 310-323.

“Μάκης Γεωργιάδης.” *Captainbook.gr*, Βιβλιοπωλείο Ο Καπετάνιος, <https://www.captainbook.gr/person/georgiadis-makis>. Accessed 13 September 2025

Νταϊάνα Κόχυλα σε συνέντευξη με Κόλλια Μία. “Νταϊάνα Κόχυλα: Η Ελληνίδα πρέσβειρα της γεύσης”, *impactalk.gr*, impacttalk, 5 Νοεμβρίου 2021, <https://impactalk.gr/el/stories-talk/ntaiana-kohyla-i-ellinida-presbeira-tis-geysis>. Accessed 11 September 2025.