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## **Evolving antinomies of culinary practice: Britain, 1968-2016**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines continuity and change in the bases of recommendations about dishes to prepare and serve in the household in Britain between 1968 and 2016. Employing a content analysis of recipes in widely circulating women's magazines, it compares a sample of recipes from 2015-16 with ones from 1968 and 1992, previously analysed in Warde (1997). In this follow-up study, new data are collected, using the same coding frame, with findings interpreted through the same conceptual framework, to classify recommendations about domestic food preparation with reference to four 'culinary antinomies' expressing symbolic, structural oppositions between (1) health and indulgence, (2) economy and extravagance, (3) convenience and care, and (4) novelty and tradition. The changing prevalence of these principles of recommendation is described. Discussion revolves around interpretation of the social significance of changing recommendations, modification of the conceptual framework, and methodological aspects of the measurement of social change.

### **Keywords**

Antinomies of culinary taste, Britain, cultural change, fashions in food, food discourses, food preparation, measurement of social change, recipes, recommended dishes, women's magazines.

### **Introduction**

Exactly what food to prepare and serve at household meals must always have been a matter for discussion, notwithstanding that the options for most have often been very restricted. Accelerated globalization of trade and cultural communication in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century expanded significantly the range of possibilities in high income countries (Inglis and Gimlin, 2009). Populations have had access to an increasingly diverse set of culinary experiences as food items, taste combinations, recipes and commercial food services. Diversification has created an impression of extensive and rapid change. This served to disrupt customary practices and created uncertainty, and often anxiety, about what to put on the domestic dinner table (eg Fischler, 1988). Greater diversity of foods and eating opportunities make many more degrees of freedom available when determining what foods to eat. Multiple options

generate both excitement and anxiety. As in many fields of cultural consumption, cultural intermediaries offer advice and re-assurance about rewarding and justifiable ways to act (Bauman, 1988: 62-67). This paper explores continuity and change in justifications as they were articulated in British print media in the period 1968-2016. The focus is primarily on the recipe columns of popular women's magazines.

Charting change, and recognising continuity, is a never-ending research task for social sciences, one conducted in a context where obtaining a reliable and comprehensive picture of what food is eaten at meals, and why, is difficult. Systematic data are usually preferable to anecdote or personal memories when seeking to capture a population's practices but are not readily available. Although industry and government statistics about production, sales and household spending are reliable and useful, they cannot indicate how foodstuffs are transformed into dishes and meals. Dishes are especially significant because they transmit the symbolic and sensory characteristics of food and form the basic building blocs of cuisines. As no systematic, regular, specifically-purposed data concerning what appears on dinner plates is available, other indirect sources of insight are required.

Ferguson (2004) shows that literary media can shape legitimate food practices. Historians and social scientists interested in changing consumption patterns have often studied published recipes closely (Humble, 2005; Vogler, 2020). Obviously, written recipes do not indicate how often, if ever, featured dishes are cooked or eaten. However, books, periodicals and newspapers give valuable indications through their published recipes of what a specific population might find acceptable or desirable to eat.<sup>1</sup> To demonstrate systematically change over time examining the same source serially can be especially useful, making periodicals potentially more valuable than cookbooks. Magazines have the advantage of providing a systematic source of data over long periods. This allows for an appreciation of continuity and change. There is a tendency in food commentary of all kinds – and consistent with the still prevalent Western myth of progress (Kumar, 1978) – to overestimate the rate of current change (Dorling, 2020) and also to imply that observed trends are cumulative and unilinear. This ignores the possibility that many apparently novel developments are mere noise or clutter (Runciman, 2015). It also diverts attention away from reversals, counter-trends and cyclical trends. To deal with these potential deficiencies, we returned to a literary genre previously analysed for 1968 and 1992, by extending the series to 2016. A systematic analysis of content in magazines at different points in time provides comparable evidence for interpreting continuity and change.

For the purpose, women's magazines are exceptionally useful, for they air and affirm general understandings about acceptable ways to eat (Hermes, 1995; Welch and Warde, 2017). This is the basis of the empirical re-study reported in this paper which

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<sup>1</sup> Better methods exist for examining the actual behaviour of households at a specific point in time, including interviews and observation, food diaries, video recordings by web-cam, etc., but they are mostly unable to demonstrate systematically changes over time. Documentary sources can serve that purpose.

examines the nature of suggestions about which dishes to serve in the household.<sup>2</sup> Giving helpful advice about re-studies<sup>3</sup>, Burawoy (2003) points to a problem in determining whether perceived differences are due to changes in the observer's conceptual approach or in the object under surveillance. Mindful of that, we sought to ensure maximum comparability with the earlier work. Not only does avoidance of error require systematic data, it also demands epistemological reflection on the nature of interpretation. To standardise observations about content, we apply the same coding frame to UK periodicals sampled at three points in time. Recipes from 2015-16 are compared with ones from 1967-8 and 1991-2 previously analysed by Warde (1997). This follow-up study analyses new data using the same coding frame and a slightly modified conceptual framework to investigate continuity and change over half a century. Using similar sources and keeping the original coding schedule provide anchorage for historical comparison. Analysis at three points in time allows comparison of trends within two separate 24-year periods, to see whether trends are linear, whether they accelerate or slow down, or whether they go into reverse.

The interpretation presented in the earlier study arose from inductive identification of the discursive strategies employed in recipe columns to recommend dishes. The columns advance reasons why a reader might want to prepare and serve a particular dish. The basic elements are condensed into more general themes which discursively frame recommendations and can be represented parsimoniously in terms of four oppositions: novelty and tradition, health and indulgence, economy and extravagance, convenience and care. These 'cultural antinomies' are complementary analytic constructs designed to capture significant sources of tension in determining what it is good to eat. Their component terms are regularly employed to identify, applaud and recommend attributes of food to be served at meals. They enunciate principles to guide selection from the vast range of alternative dishes and constitute key themes in discourses of culinary taste and practice. It is proposed that they echo past and present cultural controversies and institutionalised divisions (Warde, 1997: 172-8). Here, they are re-applied in order to see whether the themes and emphases in the magazines have grown weaker, or stronger, or have remained the same over the periods between 1968, 1992 and 2016 and to re-appraise them in light of other studies having had varying success in deploying this conceptual framing (eg Frostling-Henningsson et al, 2014; Gram and Blichfeldt, 2014; Geyzen, 2015; Jackson, 2018; Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2007; Meah and Jackson, 2017; Parsons, 2015; Schneider and Davis, 2010).

The paper has three main aims. First, to estimate the rate and direction of change in recommendations about which dishes are good to prepare, using an indicative content analysis. Second, to evaluate the continued applicability of the conceptual framework of culinary antinomies employed in the earlier study. Third, to reflect on methodological issues arising in studies of continuity and change.

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<sup>2</sup> Now visual mass media and social media play a greater role in public reflection about what to eat (Rousseau, 2012). However, as Favaro (2020) points out, women's magazines continue to be influential as they themselves issue electronic versions.

<sup>3</sup> This project is a re-study in the sense that we rely on reported findings from the earlier project because the raw data is no longer accessible.

Section two describes sources, methods, data and techniques. Section three presents findings about continuity and change in the themes, terms and forms used to recommend recipes. The discussion in section four focuses on interpretation of the empirical findings, reappraisal of the antinomies, and the theoretical and conceptual implications for the study of social and cultural change.

### **Data, method and technique**

The application of content analysis techniques to women's general weekly or monthly magazines has proved an effective means to examine matters of household economy and domestic organisation (Hands and Shove, 2005; Davis et al, 2016; Martens and Scott, 2005; Warde, 1997). On sale for over a century, some individual titles have survived many decades and have a mass readership. Many contain columns about food which revolve predominantly around recipes. Such articles suggest dishes that might be useful, wise, acceptable or desirable to prepare in the domestic kitchen. They can thus serve as an index of continuity and change in approaches to domestic food preparation, helpfully avoiding reliance on personal memory, individual experience and anecdote. Their continuous regular appearance over decades addressing large audiences make them a public archive of representations of legitimate practice at different points in time. They record changing products and techniques and offer a window onto the evolution of taste.

The object of the earlier analysis is a sample of recipes published in the most widely circulated women's *magazines* in the UK. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century they were enormously popular and meal preparation generated a significant part of their content. Then the principal popular medium for the circulation of recipes, their role subsequently diminished. Specialist food *periodicals* have appeared, part of a process of more differentiated journal publishing (Foster and Hollows, 2020). Ideas and advice also appear much more frequently on dedicated television channels and internet sites which 25 years ago did not exist (Rousseau, 2012; Favors, 2020). Food blogs have proliferated (Goodman and Jaworska, 2020). Recipes are widely available on-line. Cookery books are more accessible than ever, having reached 10 per cent of non-fiction sales for the first time in 2016 (Nielsen Book Research, 2020). In the face of such competition, the columns of women's magazines are less influential and a less comprehensive record of widely circulated recommendations about domestic food planning and preparation.

The readerships of weekly and monthly magazines differ. In all years the readers of the weeklies are typically a little older and about 15 per cent less likely to be in market research class categories A,B and C1, comprising educationally-qualified professional and white collar workers, which may be used as a rough proxy for social class and cultural capital (Warde, 1997: NRS, 2015). For 2016 we selected seven magazines with the largest circulations which regularly devote space to recipe columns, four of which are published weekly, three monthly.<sup>4</sup> A sample of 49 recipes

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<sup>4</sup> Due to limited resources and a wish also to examine some specialist periodicals we selected seven women's magazines: *Woman*, *Woman's Own*, *best*, *Bella* (weekly); *Good Housekeeping*, *prima*, *Woman and Home* (monthly). Of these, four were present in the samples for both 1968 and 1992: *Woman*, *Woman's Own*, *Good Housekeeping* and *Woman and Home*. Others included previously

from the weeklies and 78 from the monthlies was drawn from issues at quarterly intervals throughout the year and recipes were randomly selected within each issue to obtain a similar number as in the previous years. An inter-coder reliability exercise on a sub-sample of texts was conducted to ground the analysis of content.

Analysis involved applying the same basic codes from the earlier study to the new tranche of recipes. Systematic comparison was conducted using only these, although a few additional codes were added to capture emergent themes since 1992. Base codes, which distil the many roughly synonymous terms in everyday discourse about the qualities of good food, are aggregated into summary concepts to characterise the main principles underlying recommendations for recipes. These consolidated measures of central principles permit a more reliable sense of continuity and change as data reduction deals with problems of small counts, militates against spurious precision and facilitates interpretation. The empirical investigation shows that those principles remain the most commonly adduced grounds for recommending recipes. The principles reveal and express oppositions and tensions in evaluations of ways of eating, about which among alternative options to follow and how a consequential course of action might be justified to oneself and others. For practices surrounding food selection are contentious. The health, reputational and hedonic consequences of poor choices create uncertainty. Food choice makes some people anxious (Jackson, 2015; Kjaernes, Harvey and Warde, 2007). Which principles to respect is an axis of public controversy about how best to eat. By employing a further form of reduction, derived from structuralist techniques for identifying meaning in textual material, an additional level of meaning can be extracted through exposure of structural oppositions, or antinomies. Antinomies express antagonistic or oppositional relationships between principles underpinning competing recommendations.

Our study has limitations. The sample is small. Different coders were employed in the earlier studies. The inherent ambiguities of very brief texts, the possibility of different readings, and uncertainties about interpretation of specific terms and symbols mean that the numeric evidence should not be over-interpreted. As detailed counts may be unreliable, we cluster codes (see Table 1) and regard only large movements as evidence of significant change, interpreting small differences as probable continuities. Despite these reservations, the data do constitute a standardised series of observations at different points in time from which to estimate trends. Recommendations reveal meanings and aspirations associated with domestic food preparation and provide basic systematic evidence for a historical account of change in culinary culture.

## Findings

### *Frequency of appearance of coded items*

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were ignored for several reasons, having either gone out of production, ceased having a regular recipe column, or whose circulation figures were low or unavailable. (In addition we selected three specialist food periodicals widely purchased in 2016, *BBC Good Food*, *Delicious* and *Jamie*, which are referred to briefly.)

Table 1 about here

Table 1 indicates the frequency with which 41 relevant attributes of dishes appear in each of the three samples. It shows that grounds for recommendation increased in linear fashion in some instances, while others changed very little or fluctuated. Some changes result from a changed format in the writing of recipes to include precise information about calories, nutritional content and preparation time. In addition, though, recipes being quick and easy gained in prominence, as did reference to national origins, quality of ingredients and seasonality.

### ***Shifting antinomies: change 1968-2016***

Table 2 about here

Table 2 presents the evidence in terms of the same four culinary antinomies of taste which organised interpretation in the original study. It shows how recommendations differ between weekly and monthly magazines at the three dates. For instance greater concern is shown for economy among the weeklies and for novelty and provenance for the monthlies. Differences reflect the different audiences and purposes of the two types of magazine (see also Foster, 2020: 6-7).

Figure 1 about here

If a recipe includes reference to any one (or more) of the features subsumed under an antinomial term, it is deemed to be using that quality to recommend the recipe. Figure 1 offers a schematic representation of historical movement by indicating the degree of difference between the proportions recorded for each year. To avoid spurious accuracy we treat a positive or negative change in proportion of less than 33% as insignificant (=) and identifying significant change at three levels (ie +, ++, +++ and -, --). This reveals trends in recommendations.

### ***Health and Indulgence***

Although recipes were sometimes commended as nutritious or balanced in 1968, health was of limited concern and was scarcely mentioned in the monthly magazines. The theme increased very significantly between 1968 and 1992 by which time the British state had begun explicitly to move away from productivist over-supply during the 1980s and promote quality foods and healthy eating by emphasising consumption of fruit, vegetables, fish and fibre (Mahoney, 2015; Marsden 2010). It increased again, though insignificantly, after 1992. However, over the whole period this was the greatest change measured. The main expression of this concern was the increasingly routine recording of the calorific content of dishes and the proportions of fat, sugar and fibre in each dish, the implication being that readers should exercise self-discipline in food consumption for the better maintenance of the body. However, nutritious food which will best serve bodily and physical functionality is not uncontestably valuable on all occasions. Sometimes it is countered by advice to relax restraint, to treat oneself to some special, perhaps naughty, delicacies. The recommendation to indulge appeared much less frequently than to eat healthily but nevertheless at a constant rate in all three years, invoked in

approximately one recipe in seven. The principles of pleasure and nutrition vie with one another.

### *Economy and Extravagance*

One consideration when preparing dinner is how much it might cost. Specific mention that a dish was not costly was marginally greater in 2016 than in 1968. Price was always a greater preoccupation of the weeklies. It had become less significant by 1992, when only 3% of recipes in the monthly magazines commended a dish on this basis, but grew in importance again by 2016, possibly in the face of the impact of the financial austerity imposed by Conservative governments since 2010 (Toynbee and Walker, 2020). A similar dip in the appeal of extravagance – occasions when people want luxurious, perhaps rich, expensive, and showy foods on the table – occurred between 1968–1992, but was reversed by 2016, surfacing in about one in five recipes. This might also be attributed to austerity measures, a result of an inclination to use food as compensation in the form of occasionally attainable luxuries. It could, however, equally reflect a growing interest in the sensory and sociable potentialities of food consumption (Rousseau, 2012). Commensurately, a larger proportion of the recipes were recommended for special occasions than previously.

### *Convenience and the home-made*

References to convenience increased substantially over the period. Key indicators are the inclusion of terms like ‘easy’ and ‘quick’. Recipes increasingly specified how long a dish would take to prepare and, where necessary, to cook. In 1992 more than two thirds of recipes in both weeklies and monthlies commended the virtues of convenience. The value was always greater in the monthlies, and it is interesting that their concern was sustained through to 2016, while declining in the weeklies. In 1968 the weeklies had stressed the home-made and comforting aspects of dishes more than their convenience, although that effect had disappeared by 1992. For middle class readers who perceive themselves to be short of time and to have less time to devote to lengthy preparation, the value of convenience always and very substantially outweighed the merits of the home-made, although the latter value increased for them very significantly between 1992 and 2016. A similar preoccupation with saving time is apparent in contemporary cookery books where compilations of dishes which take less than 30 minutes have become common. This has not however meant that the virtues of preparing meals ‘from scratch’ with fresh ingredients have been abandoned. The dilemma posed by the competing virtues of convenience and handicraft persist.<sup>5</sup>

### *Novelty and tradition*

One of the most powerful trends of recent decades has been the aestheticisation of everyday life (Featherstone, 1991; Reckwitz, 2017; Sassatelli, 2007). Food preparation is ever more frequently subjected to judgment by the criteria of art.

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<sup>5</sup> 16 per cent of recipes in 2016 are for dishes that are explicitly *both* home-made and convenient. This is the same proportion as in 1968 but significantly greater than in 1992. Dishes ‘cooked from scratch’ which can be prepared in a short period of time are symbolically at a premium.



Advertisements, food photography, restaurant menus, television programmes like Master Chef in the UK, food guides and the columns of restaurant critics, recipe books, and social media representation of foods and dishes frame food preparation as artistic (Johnston and Baumann, 2010: 85ff; Warde, Paddock and Whillans, 2020: 178ff). This tendency is detectable in the women's magazines. Powered by the changes in the wider culinary environment, greater attention is paid to the aesthetic properties of food. Focus on appearance and presentation is facilitated by higher quality professional photography. Dishes are valued for their sensory characteristics, for being colourful, and for having contrasts in texture. Both novelty and tradition speak to the aesthetic aspects of dishes. Both poles of the antinomy increased their presence between 1992 and 2016. The weekly magazines in particular demonstrate greater appreciation of novelty and draw more extensively on foreign cuisines after 1992 (see Table 2) as they come to share the monthlies' preoccupations with innovation and style.

Recipes in 2016 are marked by diverse ingredients and eclectic origins. The ostensibly unpretentious weekly magazines include dishes like 'Grilled king prawns and Thai dipping sauce', 'Lamb sosatie kebabs', 'jungle prawn curry', 'Greek lamb with watermelon, olive and mint salad', 'Gin-cured sea trout with apple and fennel', and 'Roast squash, spinach and sage risotto'. The most up-market monthlies include 'Chipotle lamb kebabs with chimichurri', 'Green mango and fish curry', 'Paprika lamb with borlotti beans', and 'Salmon and wasabi burgers'. Dishes come from around the world – requiring many different basic ingredients, spices and herbs – with their foreign origin central to their appeal. While aesthetic considerations are even more highly respected in the periodicals specialised on food, the women's magazines have also introduced 'foodie' preoccupations (Johnston and Baumann, 2010; Warde, Paddock and Whillans, 2019).

### ***Change in other attributes, 1968-2016***

Other repeated measures reveal greater emphasis on the symbolic and social allure of foreign dishes, vegetarian dishes, seasonal dishes and dishes for special occasions (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 about here

In 2016, 17 per cent of recipes contained an explicit reference to a cuisine of origin.<sup>6</sup> A further 43 per cent made implicit reference to a cuisine of origin beyond the UK. Over the period from 1968 foreign dishes grew steadily more common, although the need to name explicitly the cuisine of origin becomes slightly less important after 1992. This reflects the long term 'routinisation of the exotic' (Warde, 1997: 61). By 1992 it had become normal to draw on dishes from around the world. By 2016 more than half the recipes were from non-British cuisines.<sup>7</sup> The differences between weekly and monthly magazines converge in their recognition and recommendation of 'foreign' dishes as readers of all classes and ages are expected to be comfortable

<sup>6</sup> The cuisines were: Asia, Bangladesh, France, Greece, India, Iran, Ireland (2), Mexico (2), North Africa, Portugal (Madeira), Scandinavia, South Africa, Spain, Texas, Thailand (3), and UK (2).

<sup>7</sup> Few dishes are explicitly identified as 'British' but by implication those which are 'unmarked' would be taken for granted to be so (see Zerubavel, 2018).

with 'foreign' food. Class distinctions with respect to knowledge and experience of unfamiliar cuisines certainly did not disappear (Warde, Paddock and Whillans, 2020: 178-200) but displays of cultural capital became more subtle than merely eating dishes whose pedigree is not British.

The proportion of savoury dishes not including meat or fish products increased very substantially from 1 per cent in 1968 to 12 per cent in 1992 to 26 per cent in 2016. Latterly, especially in the last decade, greater public attention has been paid to the claims of social movements for vegetarianism and most recently veganism, as concerns for animal welfare, animal rights and climate change have grown. It also reflects the normalisation and acceptance of public health advice about the nutritional value of vegetables. Vegetarianism has shifted from being a preoccupation of a (sometimes stigmatised) sub-cultural minority to general acceptability as one legitimate style of eating among several (Warde, Paddock and Whillans, 2020: 212). Migration, improved supply, food scares around red meat, better vegetable cookery, cultural omnivorousness, and appreciation of foreign cuisines in which vegetables play a significant role are among the social and cultural reasons for the shift, as well as ethical concern and effective political mobilisation. In addition, vegetable dishes are often relatively cheap.

Seasonality is also more salient. Seasonal attribution was rare (less than 10%) in 1968 and 1992, but was identified in 33% of recipes in 2016 (57% if 'Christmas' denotes a season as well as a special occasion). To eat foods that are in season has both economic and gastronomic merits as produce is typically cheaper and in prime condition. However, when global supply chains provide most items all year, seasonality may be being used loosely, a journalistic ploy to embellish and give added justification to the selected recipes.

The proportion of recipes included because of their suitability for special occasions also increased steadily. In 1968 the magazines performed the function of a domestic household manual with dishes and meals primarily tailored to family households on ordinary weekdays. The accessibility and widespread deployment of convenience foods may have reduced the need for such advice. Greater aesthetic concerns may also have redirected attention to cooking for special occasions. Among those mentioned are Christmas Day, Boxing Day, Valentine's Day, dinner party, weekend, weekend food, Mother's Day, Bank Holiday and barbecue. Food being discussed more as a marker of special occasions might imply that readers seek less schooling in daily cooking and more advice about the exceptional, whether for practical purposes or because cooking from scratch is reserved for special occasions.

### ***Coda: Comparing the specialist food periodicals, 2016***

The material in the women's magazines continues to display the central themes of everyday discourse about taste in food in the context of domestic provisioning. The criteria employed define the parameters of what it is appropriate to cook and to eat. The discourse sanctions the use by ordinary households of a diverse range of dishes for different occasions. Readers are addressed as competent and interested but without intense culinary enthusiasm being expected. The magazines are neither manuals for elaborate cookery nor treatises in gastronomy. The specialist food

periodicals, by contrast, are entirely devoted to food and eating, addressing a more committed audience, one sufficiently interested to read a hundred pages devoted exclusively to food and its preparation. It is, therefore, interesting to compare their discursive strategies and themes in order to judge whether the same principles and controversies pertain.

Table 3 about here

A sample of 66 recipes from three periodicals dedicated only to food and its preparation were analysed using the same coding schema. The results are displayed in the final column of Table 3. The same concerns and themes are present, but the specialist periodicals place greater emphasis on tradition, health and convenience. Issues of economy are slightly less prominent, with extravagance and indulgence not highly promoted. The attention paid to cuisine of origin and the promotion of vegetarian recipes is greater. Fewer recipes are directed towards special occasions. The focus is on everyday cooking, but in a more elaborate manner. The value of home-made meals is stressed, more recipes require higher levels of skill, and more advice is given about the whole meal (implying more than one course) and accompanying alcoholic drinks. As might have been anticipated, they are directed towards enthusiastic domestic cooks, men as well as women. The orientation smacks of connoisseurship or 'foodyism', although diluted for a wider audience. They air the concerns of the moment, most notably in the promotion of vegetarian dishes. The tendency is more pronounced in the specialist periodicals where 43 per cent of all dishes in the sample are vegetarian by composition (see Table 3), evidence that innovative preparation of vegetable dishes has come to the forefront of culinary fashion. They also highlight qualities which make for symbolically distinctive dishes, not only by selecting recipes identified with foreign cuisines but also by making greater reference to tradition. Both tradition and novelty are recommended equally frequently in the specialist periodicals, whereas the women's magazines value novelty over tradition.

## Discussion

### *Measuring change*

Mindful of Burawoy's (2003) concern that perceived differences unearthed by re-studies may be due to changes in the observer's conceptual approach or in the object under surveillance, we sought to minimise such effects by retaining the same interpretive frame and by examining the same source serially. Yet all other variation is still not controlled. New empirical developments after 1992 could not be captured by the original coding frame, although they can be readily accommodated by adding a few new codes to record matters insignificant earlier but of current interest. Of note, 6 per cent of recipes were explicitly marked as gluten free, 14 per cent attached a brand name to one or more ingredients, 26 per cent bore the imprimatur of a professional chef, and 2 per cent were explicitly vegan. These attributes reflect concerns with allergies, gastronomic qualities and ethics escalating in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

More problematic for our methodological approach are developments in periodicals' publishing. The sampling strategy is compromised because of the changing role and function of women's magazines (Foster, 2020; Gough-Yates, 2003; Holmes, 2007). For most practical purposes, recipes are now more readily accessible through other channels. For example, in the past, weeklies were exceptionally popular; in 1968 *Woman* and *Woman's Own* each had over 10 million readers while current readership is estimated at 545,000 and 739,000 respectively (National Readership Survey, 2014-15).<sup>8</sup> Women read the magazines for many purposes, including for entertainment and relaxation, although the weeklies have always had a strong utilitarian bent oriented towards the circulation of information and advice about what should be prepared in the domestic kitchen. Both weeklies and monthlies now give food less coverage, with fewer features, fewer recipes (in some magazines none at all) and fewer advertisements.<sup>9</sup> Paying more attention to special occasions and validating extravagance suggest reduced concern with the economics of household management and more with entertainment. Nevertheless, despite modifications in the focus of the magazines, the basic object of study is similar. Recipes are concise and functional sets of instructions remarkably consistent in format over centuries. Change in the wider cultural landscape since 1968 does not prevent effective coding of the 2016 recipes using the original schema. This is itself some evidence of continuity, as is the fact that the same dilemmas and tensions remain relevant.

### *Antinomies of taste*

The major principles supporting the recommendations in 1968 persist. Nutrition, ease of preparation, expense and taste remain primary criteria and points of contestation. The measured values of each of the eight qualities reveal some linear movements but also much fluctuation. For example, the values of health and convenience had risen sharply by 1992 and remained at a high level thereafter, whereas the attractions of home-made, novel and extravagant dishes fell in the first period but recovered in the second. A trend apparent in one period may be reversed in another. The qualities depicted by one conceptual pole of an antinomy may gain in dominance over a period of time but without eliminating opposing properties. For example, healthiness is now a pre-eminent imperative even though nutrition guidelines can justifiably be ignored on some occasions in pursuit of pleasure and comfort. The poles currently less strongly emphasized continue to assert that prepared food should be exciting, emotionally gratifying and expressive of personal relationships. Such shifts are due to internal processes within the field of food but are also responses to wider institutional pressures like adjustments in the standard of living and cultural trends. As external conditions shift so too does the discourse of

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<sup>8</sup> Monthlies always sold many fewer copies but their market share has held up better (Warde, 1997; NRS, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> The proportion of the content of 'women's interest' magazines devoted to food fluctuates. In the seven women's magazines in the sample in 2016, the number of recipes printed has reduced since 1992 to roughly the same levels as 1968. Coverage of food in the monthlies fell very significantly between 1992 and 2016. For example, *Good Housekeeping* in November 2015 devoted 12 per cent of its 284 pages to food-related items (recipes, commentary and advertisement) compared to 32 per cent in November 1991 and 25 per cent in November 1967. In the four weekly magazines the trend was weaker, but each had proportionately fewer pages devoted to food in 2016 than in 1992.

the magazines, the qualities formulated and accentuated resulting from prior development and new contexts.

What makes a good meal is contestable. Hence, *antinomies*. The designated antinomies are not themselves theoretical concepts, but rather helpful classificatory devices to cluster the raw codes and organise thematically the most valued qualities of featured dishes. However, and not accidentally, they reflect the concerns and dilemmas that people face when selecting dishes to prepare. Is dinner for one's visiting parents to be quick, cheap, nutritious and ordinary, or, labour intensive, indulgent and imaginative? Personal dilemmas reflect tensions within collective social arrangements and appear as local and field-specific instances of structural fault-lines in the contemporary political and economic order. Whether to purchase manufactured products rather than rely on domestic provision recalls the longstanding suspicion and critique of commodification. Novelty and tradition revolve around the paradox of the culture of modernity which, as exemplified in reactions to unfamiliar foods, prizes both excitement and security. Economy and extravagance conjure up critical discourses around the injustices of social inequality and the moral perils of both meanness and excess. Anxieties about comportment contrast the disciplined management of the body with expressive relaxed hedonism.

Since the culinary antinomies were derived inductively from the textual material in the first study, it was possible that new ones may have arisen or that the originals required adjustment.<sup>10</sup> The applicability of the convenience – care antinomy has been criticised. Geysen (2015: 23), examining the acceptability of canned food in post-war Flanders, showed a need for elaboration because in more politically progressive magazines 'the antinomy was transformed into complementary concepts'. Meah and Jackson (2017) identify instances where the distribution of convenience foods is itself an act of care.<sup>11</sup> In retrospect, the term care was poorly chosen. Coded items were initially aggregated under a more accurate heading, 'home-made', which in 1968 conveyed a dominant ideological message about the virtues of housewifery in the sampled magazines.<sup>12</sup> Attentive preparation of family meals by housewives and mothers was interpreted too exclusively as an obligatory expression of love and care; home-made dishes were superior because they affirmed family relationships. Pursuing convenience at the expense of best housewifery practice was thus potentially shameful. Sympathetic acknowledgement of the pressures and practical constraints upon women with household

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<sup>10</sup> The mean number of antinomial concepts referred to by each recipe in 2016 is 2.4, compared to 1.7 for both earlier years. (Multiple attributions occur because, for example, a recipe might be described as convenient *and* cheap, but also some are described as convenient *and* home-made (16% in 2016) or novel *and* traditional (19%).) If this were due to differences in coding, the score for every antinomy would potentially be overestimated and would exaggerate the degree of change over time. However, increased attributions probably result from complexity introduced by referring to both poles of one or more antinomies, which characterised almost half of all recipes in 2016.

<sup>11</sup> It is important to note that convenience does not only refer to the use of ready-made meals (Gofton and Ness, 1991: 20-1). Also, recommendations do not re-describe actions; compromises in practice often defy logical contradictions.

<sup>12</sup> In 1968, the one notable exception in the sample was *She* which was not attuned to housewifery having instead an iconoclastic proto-feminist stance. It included only one recipe per issue among which was a paella cooked in 15 minutes.

responsibilities facilitated acceptance of convenience, but it was not wholeheartedly welcomed. Concerns for convenience and domestic production are in constant tension. Both can be positive attributes. As with all antinomies, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive and may be endorsed simultaneously: 16 per cent of recipes in 2016 are for dishes that are explicitly both home-made *and* convenient. While the home-made is still valued in 2016, the term's culinary and aesthetic intimations point to 'cooking from scratch' rather than housewifely obligation.

### *Trends in recommendation*

Health and convenience, the virtues most commonly endorsed, have become thoroughly entrenched and taken-for-granted and now often require no explicit discussion. Reference in the magazines can be telegraphic. Calorie counts, for example, remind readers of health issues. The increasing centrality of the value of healthy eating is signified by 59 per cent of 2016 recipes giving a calorie count and 56 per cent stating fat, fibre or carbohydrate content, information absent in 1968. However, the minor pole of the antinomy, indulgence, was undiminished, indicating the persistent claims of pleasure and emotional comfort. Calculations of time are very common, indication of the pressures of coordination attached to meal arrangements. Preparation time, an indication of convenience, is very frequently recorded; 83 per cent of recipes in 2016 compared to 8 per cent in 1968. The mean time required was 24 minutes in 2016. Not all require minimal preparation with seven requiring an hour or longer while 38 per cent required no more than a quarter of an hour. Other terms suggesting convenience, like 'easy' and 'quick', also become more prominent by 2016. Nevertheless, food being home-made is as important as in 1968, a constant reminder of popular suspicion of industrially processed food.

Magazine content remains overwhelmingly directed towards women in a domestic setting. Restaurants, for example, are absent except for celebrity chefs contributing recipes. Nevertheless, articles are no longer addressed to housewives providing for the members of nuclear families as was implicitly the case in the 1960s. The long-term increase in women's employment in the formal economy, changing ideology of personal relationships including companionate marriage and co-habitation, de-feminisation of cookery more generally, and re-negotiation of domestic divisions of labour has not lifted ultimate responsibility for domestic food preparation from the shoulders of women, but media representation of women's expectations is much different. The principal target of the magazines is no longer a reader who feels obliged to cook one or more meals every day for a family from scratch. The relationship with pre- and part-prepared products is less conflicted, convenience foods being disparaged less than in the 1960s when they were often presented as items 'that menaced the idea of the good housewife' (Geyzen, 2015: 24). Further evidence of modification of purpose is the increased numbers of recipes for special occasions or with many servings; 37 per cent of recipes in 2016 are for seven or more persons, compared to 11 per cent in 1968 and 29 per cent in 1992.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps

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<sup>13</sup> A few recipes are for one or two persons (9% in 2016 – more than in 1992 but slightly fewer than in 1968) so still most dishes are designed for household meals.

more significantly, however, food preparation constitutes a smaller proportion of the content of the magazines.

Another antinomy perhaps requiring adjustment is that between novelty and tradition. That seemed appropriate in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century because there was a tension between recipes that promoted unfamiliar foreign ingredients and dishes and those recommending dishes familiar locally. 'Routinisation of the exotic' was posited as a major process as recipes associated with foreign cuisines appeared more often (Warde 1997:61). That trend continued and the polarity still underpins aesthetic concerns with both qualities which are increasingly referenced after 1992, although the actual term 'tradition' itself has gone out of fashion.<sup>14</sup> Synonyms like 'classic' or 'authentic' are employed instead.<sup>15</sup> One popular trope in 2016 is to combine both notions, in phrases like 'a classic combination with a modern twist'. Columnists have a marked propensity to draw simultaneously on both poles of an antinomy.<sup>16</sup> Much symbolic mileage is obtained from the appeal to novelty and invention, recipes often deriving legitimacy from their affinities with specific, primarily geographically-defined, usually foreign, culinary cultures (Chiaro, 2008).

Women's magazines and the specialist periodicals engage with a common and current discourse of taste. Despite the periodicals adopting a distinctive mode of address which assumes a significant degree of enthusiasm among their audience for the practices of cooking and eating, they share a vocabulary and inhabit a similar culinary universe. They reflect a growth of interest in food among the British public which not only supports the sales of the periodicals but has generated greater coverage in both mass and social media. The common discourse offers options rather than dictating fixed rules of good taste and in doing so has gradually come to endorse a highly eclectic range of alternatives which lack any perceptible coherent culinary principle.

## Conclusion

Given the difficulty of accounting for change, we pursued one route to systematic analysis, trying to allay Burawoy's concerns about re-studies by collecting as near as possible equivalent data at three points in time. Although only a proxy for what people actually eat, recipes in magazines document significant changes in how and which foods are recommended. Concerns with health and convenience were much less prominent in 1968. State nutrition campaigns subsequently mobilised health anxieties. Commercial forces and promotional culture re-positioned domestic provision. Aesthetic representation of food intensified and recipes of foreign provenance grew substantially.

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<sup>14</sup> If tradition implies longevity, origins in the mists of time, and regular repetition without reflection, calculation, criticism or re-evaluation, then it plays a limited role in contemporary culinary discourse.

<sup>15</sup> If funds and time permitted, the earlier years might be re-examined using a refined coding frame using different terms (additional, and distinguishing between tradition and authenticity, and probably between the innovative and experimental as opposed to re-interpretations of traditional recipes).

<sup>16</sup> Almost half of all recipes (47%) in 2016 contain a reference to both poles of a single antinomy.

We retain a conceptual framework of culinary antinomies which posits persistent and entrenched tensions around domestic food provision. The competing claims of novelty and tradition each strengthened. Endorsement of official advice about healthy eating coexists alongside a significant proportion of recipes (32%) being for desserts, cakes and biscuits. The relative merits of cooking from scratch or employing convenient alternatives remain unresolved. Overall, the antinomies capture effectively continuing ambivalence and controversy surrounding recommendations about what to eat. They identify fluctuating opinions and priorities which articulate central dilemmas of risk, commodification, lifestyle politics and social divisions in late modern capitalist societies. Although they are specified in relation to eating in Britain, it seems likely that they would apply in other countries and to other bodily practices like drinking or exercising. As a result of their institutionalised foundations, they may also have wider relevance to controversies in other cultural fields.

While the framework functions adequately, and thereby indicates fundamental continuities in British culinary organisation, the antinomies of the practice of meal preparation may require some re-calibration. Suspicion of convenience has diminished and is no longer contested in terms of housewifely virtue. The sharp contrast between novelty and tradition is softened by a more elaborate terminology of aesthetic judgment. Increased attention paid to plant-rich diets and plant-based dishes hints at an additional potential antinomy. While environmental concerns are never made explicit, the promotion of those recipes resonates with controversies over the incompatibility between living sustainably and high rates of meat consumption. Holding constant the interpretive categories is therefore not entirely unproblematic, as controversies over food consumption respond to a changing external environment.

Trends in magazine publishing are one external source of change. The magazines devote less space to food than in the 1960s, draw more on celebrity chefs than in-house journalists, and play a diminished role as sources of mundane practical advice about what to cook. Increasingly made aware of developments in the commercial restaurant sector, domestic cooks are presented with recommendations for an eclectic range of increasingly diverse dishes. This may partly reflect growing enthusiasm for creative cookery, but is probably just as much a consequence of the changing position of the magazines in the universe of mass media as on-line resources become more readily accessible as sources for recipes. As their functions change, women's interest magazines become less reliable as records of culinary taste and practice. Almost certainly it will not make sense to use the magazines to mount a similar re-study a quarter of a century hence. However, the underlying methodological principles of systematic comparative analysis using documentary sources have demonstrated their worth.

This extension to an earlier study of changing representations of food makes an empirical contribution to understanding British culinary developments. It also demonstrates the value of collecting and analysing systematic data to offer greater precision about rates and direction of change, suggesting that change is often exaggerated to the neglect of continuities. More distinctively, the analytic approach



emphasises how cultural intermediation creates a cultural environment to which individuals respond. It highlights, and seeks to provoke debate about, the principles guiding the selection of foods to prepare and serve. Notwithstanding some peculiar and distinctive features of the British case, these principles are not specific to Britain. Understanding controversy over the merits of each principle, and of appropriate ways to combine and reconcile them, is essential for explaining, and modifying, behaviour.

6563 words of text + Footnotes (733) + References (876) + Abstract (208) + 3 Tables and 2 Figures. Total word count 9332 words.

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Table 1 Coding categories for recipes: frequency of reference to attributes of dishes in 1967-8, 1991-2 and 2015-6 (percentages)

Row No.		1968	1992	2016
	TRADITION			
1	Traditional explicit: (traditional, classic, British, Union Jack visible)	1	3	4
2	Traditional: implicit (national typical occasions, e.g. Sunday roast, local ingredients)	4	4	8
3	Authentic and traditional (old-fashioned, geographical indicators, not only UK)	5	3	4
4	Imaginative/creative and traditional: (new twists to classics, not only UK)	1	8	9
5	Traditional, but not UK: (traditional, classic, geographical indicators)	3	10	12
	NATIONAL CUISINE SPECIFIED			
6	Country/region: explicit	17	22	17
7	Country/region: implicit	9	5	43
	NOVELTY			
8	Novel: explicit (foreign, fashionable, newly created, exotic)	17	12	28
9	Novel: implicit	22	5	24
10	Artistic: (nouvelle cuisine, decorated cakes)	4	5	12
	HEALTHY			
11	Explicit (healthy, nutritious, balanced)	4	16	14
12	Implicitly healthy (focus on vegetables or other ingredients promoted as healthy)	1	4	10
13	Fat, fibre, or carbohydrate content stated	-	15	56
14	Slimming: explicit	5	2	6
15	Calories estimated	-	54	59
16	Vegetarian (or vegan): explicit	1	6	3
17	Vegetarian (or vegan): implicit (by ingredients – savoury only)	-	6	23
	INDULGENT			
18	Explicit (spoiling self, naughty, breaking rules)	2	7	7
19	Implicit (tempting, etc.)	6	10	11
	CONVENIENT			
20	Convenience: explicit	6	3	3
21	Convenience: implicit	-	6	5
22	Quick	14	15	24

23	Easy	11	22	49
24	Preparation time given (in minutes)	8	44	83
25	Unconscious (eg storage, freezing)	6	30	31
26	Time-saving technology (microwave, pressure cookers)	4	5	28
	HOME-MADE			
27	Family food: explicit (home-made, mother's cooking)	20	8	15
28	Nostalgic (traditional ways of preparation, references to culinary history)	4	2	3
29	Emotion supporting (comforting, feel-good)	3	-	17
30	Extensive time invested	5	-	2
	ECONOMY			
31	Cost per head (£s)	14	23	18
32	Economical: explicit (reference to low price, savings)	15	12	6
33	Economical: implicit	1	2	7
34	Expensive/extravagant: explicit (costly, extraordinary, luxury appearance)	8	1	5
35	Expensive/extravagant: implicit	2	-	16
	FUNCTIONALITY			
36	Functional/useful (goodness, satisfying, filling, popular)	12	15	24
37	Functional/sensual (tasty, appetising, delicious)	46	65	58
	STYLE			
38	Seasonal: explicit (spring, winter, etc)	8	6	57
	MEALS AND OCCASIONS			
39	Special occasion (Christmas, birthday, barbecue etc.)	27	31	36
40	Whole meal described	8	15	9
41	Accompanying alcohol recommended	11	12	1

Table 2 References in recipes to aggregated attributes of dishes in 1967-8, 1991-2 and 2015-6, in samples of weekly and monthly magazines (percentages)

	19	68	19	92	20	16
	weekly	monthly	weekly	monthly	weekly	monthly
<b>Principles of recommendation</b>						
Tradition* (1-5)	23	8	20	30	20	40
Novelty (8-10)	18	56	10	33	41	67
Healthy (11-14)	20	3	58	72	61	78
Indulgent (18-9)	7	19	28	6	20	17
Convenient						
Expressly (20-4)	23	32	65	69	43	70
Technological (25-6)	14	8	33	33	39	51
Home-made (27-30)	34	26	12	5	27	31
Economical (32-3)	25	11	18	3	29	14
Extravagant (34-5)	7	13	2	0	16	23
<b>Other attributes</b>						
Cuisine of origin identified (6-7)	9	31	23	28	55	63
Vegetarian (inc. vegan) (16-17)	2	0	12	14	18	31
Seasonal (38)	2	11	3	9	55	58
Special occasion (39)	23	29	18	44	41	33
N=	44	72	60	64	49	78

\* For the numbering of categories see Table 1

**Figure 1: Degree and direction of change in qualities underpinning recipe recommendations**

	1968-92	1992-2016	<b>1968-2016</b>		1968-92	1992-2016	<b>1968-2016</b>
healthy	++	=	<b>+++</b>	indulgent	+	=	<b>=</b>
economical	=	++	<b>=</b>	extravagant	-	++	<b>++</b>
convenient	++	=	<b>++</b>	home-made	-	++	<b>=</b>
novel	-	++	<b>+</b>	traditional	+	+	<b>++</b>

Key     =: less than 33% shift in frequency of references;

+: increase between 33-99%; ++: doubling (100+%); +++ trebling (200+%);

-: decrease of more than a third but less than half

**Figure 2: Supplementary indicators of change (frequency of incidence, percentages)**

	1968	1992	2016	1968-1992	1992-2016	<b>1968-2016</b>
Cuisine of origin identifiably foreign	14	25	43	+	+	<b>+++</b>
Explicit reference to cuisine of origin	17	22	17	=	=	<b>=</b>
Vegetarian (inc. vegan)	1	13	26	+++	++	<b>+++</b>
Seasonal	10	6	33	-	+++	<b>+++</b>
Special occasion	27	31	36	=	=	<b>+</b>

For key see Table 1

Table 3 References in recipes to aggregated attributes of dishes in 2015-6, in samples of women's magazines and specialist food periodicals (percentages)

	Women's magazines	Specialist food periodicals
<b>Principles of recommendation</b>		
Tradition (1-5)*	32	48
Novelty (8-10)	57	48
Healthy (11-14)	72	91
Indulgent (17-18)	18	9
Convenient (20-26)	80	88
Explicit (20-4)	59	79
Refers to technological devices (25-6)	46	53
Home-made (27-30)	28	38
Economical (32-3)	20	18
Extravagant (34-5)	20	11
<b>Other attributes</b>		
Cuisine of origin identified (7-8)	60	74
Vegetarian (inc. vegan) (15-16)	26	43
Seasonal (38)	57	42
Special occasion (39)	36	23
Skill explicitly required	2	12
Whole meal described (40)	9	17
Drink advice (41)	1	15
N=	127	66

\* For numbering on categories see Table 1