A Philosophy of Recipes

Making, Experiencing, and Valuing

Edited by Andrea Borghini and Patrik Engisch

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1

Seven Philosophical Questions about Recipes

Andrea Borghini

Introduction

A restaurant menu, the guidelines for a low-carb diet, a legal dispute about vegan dairies, the first-ever episode of a TV show dedicated to food starring Julia Child—all the items on this apparently disordered list share the use of recipes and remind us of how pervasive they can be in our culture. The list is of course incomplete and the chapters in this volume bear witness to that: we discuss recipes with friends, we read about them in fiction novels, we fancy them in books about the future of food, and we can presume that recipes play a key role in our evolution too.

Everything about food, including recipes, attained overwhelming attention at all societal levels and on a global scale in the past two decades. By now, food is a key vector for social and diplomatic initiatives (see the chapter by Mendelson-Forman in this volume); it is used as a form of entertainment on TV (see the chapter by Grosglik & Kyle in this volume) and on the internet (e.g., by sharing food experiences through social media or watching *mukbang*); moreover, cooking and dining can arguably be regarded as forms of public art (see Borghini & Baldini 2021).

In short, recipes and other food items carry crucial soft power in global societies. With power, come ethical and socio-political responsibilities. To allocate them, we must also have a grip of the employed concepts. It is here at the intersection of a theoretical work intertwined with value-laden issues that I believe the work of philosophers is most needed (for a series of parallel approaches unrelated to food, see Burgess, Cappelen & Plankett 2020).

In this text, I map out some core philosophical questions that recipes elicit in an effort to collaborate with scholars studying the multiple roles of food in global societies—aesthetic, socio-political, environmental, ethical, legal, cultural, medical, economic, educational, and so on.

Are Recipes Procedures or Culinary Items?

I shall begin with the divide between two radically different conceptions of recipes that I propose to label *procedural* and *culinary*. Hence, the question:

(1) Are recipes procedures or culinary items?

According to the first conception, a recipe is a *procedure* to deliver an end result—a consumable item, a certain kind of food. The distinguishing feature of this conception is that there is a fundamental ontological distinction between recipes and the foods they deliver: we consume, taste, buy foods, but we cannot consume, taste, buy recipes. Recipes—under the procedural conception—are not strictly speaking culinary items; rather, they are tools to deliver culinary items. In the same way that one needs an espresso machine to make a cup of espresso coffee, one needs a recipe for japchae to make a bowl of it.

The procedural conception can be elaborated in a number of directions. To illustrate, here are three important theoretical junctions for its development. (i) We have procedures of all sorts and only some of them will count as recipe-procedures—yet, which ones? For instance, "Go to the woods, pick some wild berries, and eat them" may not be regarded as a recipe-procedure, but some other form of procedure related to food consumption. (ii) Specific recipes will be tied to specific procedures—yet, which ones? Consider the following procedure: "Mix some wheat flour, water, a pinch of salt and some baker's yeast, let the whole thing rest for a couple of hours and cook in the oven for 45-60 minutes." Is this a recipe-procedure for bread? One may argue that it is not specific enough and, thus, should rather be seen as a more generic procedure linked to some specific recipe-procedures (we will return to levels of generality with the sixth question). (iii) Which forms of representation are suitable for recipe-procedures? Plausible candidates may include recipe books, videos, people's memories, and computer programs, but are all representations suitable? And should we regard them as equally valuable in representing a recipe?

The second conception of recipes—the culinary conception—differs from the procedural one because it sees recipes as culinary items, that is, as entities that do have taste profiles, that can be consumed and experienced. The divide is, thus, ontological: according to the culinary conception, one cannot tell apart procedure and food because the two aspects are ingrained in several respects. In fact, procedures often do not end once the food is ready to be consumed, but involve also consumption itself (see the paper by Borghini & Ferretti in this volume for additional examples on how recipes and consumption are ingrained). For example, at an ice-cream parlor preparing ice cream to be scooped in a cone, the making of the ice cream and the preparation of the cone go hand in hand; or, think of the signature recipe by Noma chef René Redzepi "The Hen and the Egg," in which the food preparation is completed at the table with the help of the guests. Moreover, we are not blind to procedures, when consuming food, as if we could easily separate the two of them. The values we attach to specific foods most often depend on the procedures: this is true not only for aesthetic values, but also for environmental, economic, social, affective, and other varieties of values. While it is perfectly intuitive to define—say—an air balloon, regardless of the specific procedure employed to produce it, when it comes to food, we do value how it was made. Thus, procedures for making food often encompass the food consumption, while the food consumption is often understood in association with the procedure. This intertwinement is at the core of the culinary conception of recipes.

The divide between the two conceptions of recipes can be illustrated through certain semantic issues regarding the names of culinary items. Consider, for example, the term "japchae." Does the term name a recipe? Or does it name the culinary items

delivered by a plurality of recipes? According to the procedural conception, it is the latter: we have plenty of procedures to make japchae and those are its recipes; thus, "japchae" stands for all food items that are delivered through such procedures. According to the culinary conception, instead, it is the former: "japchae" stands for a recipe. So, for the culinary conception, from a restaurant menu we order recipes, which we would understand will come in one or more instances (e.g., three bowls of japchae, one for each diner); for the procedural conception, instead, we order foods and we may or may not be told what the recipe to make such foods was.

Both conceptions find some appeal in everyday ways of talking about recipes. Procedures seem to come under the spotlight when we compare recipes with a specific end result on the horizon. A vegan recipe for Genoese focaccia bread, for instance, aims at producing a food that meets the standards of Genoese focaccia even though it is made from different ingredients (no animal fat) and with slightly different procedures. Here the procedure is regarded as a tool, which is used to get to a certain result. However, when we discuss the cultural heritage of the people from Genoa and surrounding areas, and we include focaccia bread among the culturally inherited items, it is equally intuitive that we are protecting both the procedure and the food, where the two are indissolubly intertwined.

A first task ahead is, then, to devise adequate conceptual avenues to resolve the tension between the two conceptions of recipes.

Are Recipes Types or Tokens?

Some people like repetition, when it comes to food. For example, as narrated by Joe Pinsker in a recent article for *The Atlantic*, "Vern Loomis, a retired structural draftsman in West Bloomfield, Michigan, had a standard office lunch: a peanut-butter sandwich, with various fruit, vegetable, and dessert accompaniments. He ate this, he estimates, nearly every workday for about 25 years" (2019). But, one may ask, was Loomis's daily lunch really always *the same*?

The answer is, quite obviously, "No." The fruits might change, ditto for the vegetables, or the type and quality of the bread and of the peanut butter. Not to mention that Loomis's himself—his taste, his appetite, his mood—was not always the same, and that over time the office environment changed too.

This negative answer, however, holds only if one gets particular about Loomis and his food. But, should one? After all, it seems perfectly alright to refer to Loomis in the article as the same person throughout those twenty-five years; why should one have a different mind about the food?

The two opinions just stated exemplify the second conceptual question that surrounds recipes (see Borghini 2010):

(2) Should we regard recipes as tokens or types?

To illustrate with another simpler and imaginary example, suppose that during those twenty-five long years, Loomis would make himself two eggs sunny side up every morning for breakfast—did he thereby make *the same recipe* every morning?

The answer to this question seems unavoidably linked to a more fundamental one: when is it that two recipes are the same? Whether we think of recipes as procedures or as culinary items, no two procedures and no two culinary items will be exactly the same, strictly speaking. Yet, they will be the same, if we speak "loosely," as Chisholm famously put it (1969). So, the issue seems to be whether, when we speak of recipes, we are speaking strictly or loosely.

As we address the question of whether recipes are types or tokens, another set of issues unavoidably come into play. This is the relationship that there is between a recipe and the food that is associated with it. If Loomis was cooking two eggs sunny side up every morning, every morning he was making some food (which presumably he would consume before leaving home). So, the recipe for sunny side up eggs he was following, whether a type or a token, was leading up to some specific food. Call this food a *dish* (e.g., a plate with two sunny side up eggs, in the case of Loomis's breakfast).

The specific stance one wants to take about whether recipes are types or tokens may, in fact, depend on how one sees the relationship between dishes and recipes. Here are some hints, which await further theoretical development: (i) Can the same recipe lead to more than one dish? It can, only if it is a type, so that the same type of procedure or culinary item can be delivered in multiple different instances. (ii) Can the same dish have more than one recipe for it? It can, only if the identity of the dish is not strictly tied to a specific recipe that delivers it. (iii) Can there be a dish with no recipe? This question requires discussing to what extent the idea of a dish is imbued with cultural elements, in particular whether in the absence of a procedure—no matter how simple (e.g. eating cherries directly from the tree)—we would still be willing to retain what we consume a dish or even food (for a discussion of this point, see Hirvonen's chapter in this volume and also Borghini & Piras 2020c).

I emphasized here the purely theoretical sides of these interrogatives. The conceptual density, however, should not betray their importance for matters of everyday relevance. To illustrate, the repeatability of recipes is key to assess intellectual property rights issues regarding them (see the chapter by Bonadio & Weissenberger in this volume) and to shed light on the cultural significance of so-called signature recipes (see Bacchini 2020 as well as Borghini & Gandolini 2020).

What Is the Relationship between a Recipe and Its Representations?

If we read them at face value, most recipe books seem to be written with the (implicit or explicit) assumption that recipes are types—not tokens. In fact, a recipe book (implicitly or explicitly) pretends to guide a reader in delivering (or imagining to deliver) certain dishes. Similar considerations may hold for TV shows instructing viewers on how to make certain dishes, starting at least with Julia Child's first-ever episode of a TV show entirely dedicated to cooking, which first aired on February 2, 1963, and featured *boeuf Bourguignon*. Clearly, not all TV shows devoted to food and

not all social media acts dealing with food aim to represent recipes (see Grosglik & Kyle's chapter in this volume and also Pollan 2009), but, many do. Here, however, arises our third conceptual question:

(3) What is the relationship between a recipe and its representations?

I illustrate the difficulty of this question by considering three aspects of a representation: the medium, the degree of adequacy, and the representability of the recipe.

(i) *The medium*. To appreciate the complexity of question (3), we shall first reflect on the relevance of the medium for determining the identity of a recipe. Recipes have been represented via different media. These include writing (e.g., recipe books, novels, private journals), videos (e.g., in TV shows, documentaries, social media, private videos), and speaking (e.g., in rhymed recipes, word of mouth). Is the identity of a recipe dependent on the specific media used to represent it? If Julia Child would have made a radio show, rather than a TV show, would her boeuf Bourguignon recipe have been the same as the one we see in video?

For a parallel, consider some song—say African Jazz Mokili Mobimba—relayed through different media by the same band—a vinyl, a CD, or a live performance. No matter the medium, we regard the song as the same. This is not to downplay the significance of the medium to the overall value of the auditory experience, but the crucial point is that the medium is not in and of itself a discriminating element for the identity of the song. Could we say the same about recipes? Probably not, as the introduction of video recordings of recipes brought a depth of representation that sets apart the cooking instructions relayed in video from those provided in writing or speaking. This is just a hint, though, as the matter deserves closer attention.

(ii) *The degree of fidelity*. The conceptual questions regarding the link between recipes and their representations are not exhausted with a consideration of the media. In fact, it is typically far more disputed whether a certain representation of a recipe conveys information to the reader that is sufficiently detailed and accurate for replicating (or imagining to replicate) it. Borrowing a metaphor employed to describe the quality of the reproduction of music sounds, I call the type of information its "degree of fidelity." So, high-fidelity recipes are those that convey excellent quality of information, which is detailed and accurate, while low-fidelity recipes are those conveying poor quality of information, which is missing in crucial respects and possibly misleading.

Although the representation of recipes has become relatively standardized in a format providing a list of ingredients followed by some guidelines, the degree of fidelity can vary greatly. America's Test Kitchen recipe for hardboiled eggs is highly detailed (America's Test Kitchen 2018), to the point of possibly being intimidating, while other books may leave much room for discretion, e.g., by providing a wide range of cooking time, or by leaving unspecified the initial water temperature or the type of pot to be used.

The degree of fidelity exercises a normative pressure over the reader, suggesting how a recipe *ought to be* reproduced and, thus, influencing its development over time.

For this reason, it is a critical element for understanding and possibly predicting how recipes evolve over time and across different communities. Although implicitly it has come under the scrutiny of scholars working on the history of recipes (see, for example, Floyd & Forster 2003; Elias 2017), it deserves a closer theoretical analysis in order to be systematically used across various fields of study.

(iii) *The representability of the recipe*. Many recipes are passed down over generations and circulated between peers. But, are all recipes representable? And, supposing that they are, does representability imply transmissibility? Case studies to be considered for this discussion include: signature recipes, that is those that can be arguably made only by certain people because of their special skills (think of Jirō Ono's sushi); recipes whose identity is rooted in improvisation (for a parallel, see Bertinetto 2020); recipes that owe their identity to special ingredients (e.g., a rare fish that will never be eaten again) or special contextual conditions (e.g., *your* wedding cake).

Obviously, we can film Jirō Ono making sushi as well as a cook improvising a recipe or preparing a wedding cake. As for the recipes involving special ingredients or environmental conditions, we could still have specifics for them. Finally, Jirō and the cook improvising a recipe may write down some guidelines for others that aim to follow their steps. This line of reply seems fair. Yet, having a video recording or some guidelines does not, in itself, guarantee that the recipe is transmissible, because no one may ever have Jirō's abilities in the future and because one may argue that the whole point of improvisation is that its repetition is a different sort of action. As for the recipes involving special ingredients or conditions, they would not be replicable in light of such "material" constrains. Hence, some recipes seem not to be transmissible, for limitations related expertise, type of action involved, and material circumstances.

One may at this point try to push the line further and argue that, for some recipes, we cannot even produce an adequate representation. Can you really represent Jirō's abilities of sushi making, his expertise? What would such a representation look like? (Ways of answering these questions may be suggested by the debate on the relationship between know-how and knowledge; see Pavese 2016, 2018.)

To be called into question are, then, the ideas that *all* recipes must be transmissible and representable because for some recipes, no matter what your conception is, there may be no possible avenue for transmissibility or representation.

How Do Recipes Come To Be, Cease to Exist, and What Keeps Them in Existence?

The next question on the list is taken straight from the standard repertoire of questions that philosophers pose about any sort of thing that comes under their scrutiny. If there are recipes, what governs their existence? More precisely:

(4) How do recipes come to be, cease to exist, and what keeps them in existence?

There is a quick way out of this question, namely the so-called Platonism about recipes (see Borghini 2015), according to which recipes do not come to be and never

cease to exist—they are eternal, like some people say that sets, geometrical proportions, or numbers are eternal. Platonism about recipes, however, faces some important challenges. Most notably it must provide an explanation of the fact that we do not have high-fidelity representations for recipes, while we do have some neat representations for sets, numbers, and geometrical proportions. Thus, for the latter it seems more plausible to argue that they enjoy an ideal, eternal status of existence, but can we say that about recipes? This is not enough, of course, to discard Platonism about recipes, but it may be enough to suggest that we should also consider alternative options.

It is useful to build a discussion about the modes of existence of recipes by way of different sorts of examples. I consider three here.

(i) *Recipes by accident*. The first set of examples I want to consider serves to reflect on how recipes come into being and deal with episodes where a recipe originates from some accidental procedure. Imagine a time in the past when no human had a recipe for eating corn and no human had tried it and imagine a community living in an area surrounded by corn fields. One day a fire erupts in some corn fields, right when the kernels on the cobs are ripe. The people visit the field after the fire and find some cooked corn. Attracted by the sweet smell, they try it, discovering that it is delicious and nutritious. Did the community just witness to an accidental execution of the recipe for corn on the cob?

While this example is fictitious, the literature on recipes is filled with tropes regarding amazing foods that were supposedly discovered by accident. The putative list includes nachos, popsicles, sandwiches, potato chips, brandy, cheese left in a cave, and many more items that may be among your favorite. The key issue for present purposes is: when exactly did the recipe come into existence?

If we keep on a side the Platonist answer (i.e., the recipe existed all along), we are left with two main options. The first is that the recipe came to exist by accident—e.g., the fire did, literally speaking, make corn on the cob for the first time. The second is that the recipe came to exist only once someone traced what happened (e.g., the fire cooked the fruits of the corn plants) and singled out that process as a recipe-making process. This second option has further ramifications, which we shall explore in a moment.

The issue at stake is by no means abstruse. If recipes can be executed also by non-human agents, we have a straightforward argument to claim that a machine can make the same recipes that humans can make, regardless of whether machines can "reason" like humans do (see Tuccini et al. 2020). This may well be a delicate topic to discuss in the years to come, when meals (including, e.g., traditional dishes) may be prepared by non-human agents.

(ii) *Unnamed recipes*. Let us now focus on the second camp described above, according to which recipes exist only once someone traces the recipe-making process. We can use a second set of examples to show that this camp can be further divided down into quite distinct positions.

Massimo Bottura famously named one of his signature recipes *Oops I dropped the lemon tart!* after dropping the lemon tart in the kitchen. Now, imagine a parallel cook that, on the same evening that Bottura comes up with his new signature recipe, drops their lemon tart in the kitchen and decides, nonetheless, to serve it to the client, after explaining that, unfortunately, the lemon tart had been dropped (but that it was nonetheless safe to eat). Bottura gave a name to his recipe, thereby turning completely

the expectations of the diner and perhaps the meaning of the dish that was being served to them; the other cook did nothing of this, simply offered their excuses to the client and decided not to charge them for the dessert. For present purposes, the question is: did the two cooks serve the same recipe?

Cases where different communities prepare foods from nearly identical recipes, albeit using different names for them, are relatively widespread. For instance, farinata, fainè, cecina, socca may be regarded as linguistic variants of a same recipe. But, should they? Or should they be regarded as different recipes?

These examples remark the putative relevance of performative acts in determining the existence of a recipe: until Bottura named his recipe, such a recipe arguably did not exist (see also Borghini 2015 on this). At the same time, while performatives may be regarded as sometimes necessary, they are arguably not sufficient in determining the existence of a recipe—otherwise one could turn, say, a bowl of japchae into a pizza margherita just by changing name to it. Also, not everyone can be in charge of the performative act: just like for works of art, only authors (typically) have the power to determine the name of the artwork, so with recipes only certain people have the authority to determine their name (I will come back to this in the last question I will examine).

(iii) *Recipes without dishes*. A third set of examples would serve us to reflect on the conditions under which recipes may continue to exist or cease to exist. As Haber (in this volume) suggests, recipes are sometimes used not to actually prepare foods, but to imagine ways of preparing and consuming foods that perhaps no one will ever eat. From here, it's just a short step to ask whether there are recipes for dishes (i.e., foods that we can eat) that do not yet exist, and whether there are recipes for inedible dishes. These questions parallel those regarding sounds that we cannot hear or that do not exist (Cray 2016) and architectural plans for buildings and cities that cannot exist or that we cannot inhabit (e.g., like those described by Escher or Calvino).

The matter is delicate because if we admit that there are recipes that cannot deliver a dish, then the existence of a recipe is independent of whether or not it is actually executed. A recipe could come to be and continue to exist regardless of whether someone cooks it. Yet, we could ask, is it indispensable that someone keeps thinking or talking about it? In other words, should the recipe be part of a culinary world, regardless of whether people (can) cook it or not?

The three sets of examples examined bring to the surface conceptual issues that have received sparse attention in the literature on recipes and that are urgent to address, if we aim to create solid common ground for conversing about value-laden themes related to recipes and culinary culture.

Are There Indispensable Elements in a Recipe?

To some it may seem even obvious that an ice-cream cone must be served in a cone, or that French fries must be made from potatoes. These examples illustrate the fact that people tend to associate certain recipes with some obligated passages. Other times, the obligation is somewhat enforced. To protect the integrity of *pesto alla genovese*, the

Consorzio del pesto genovese requires, among other things, that the basil used for the recipe be from the cultivar "basilico genovese." Yet, most diners cannot access such cultivar on a daily basis; hence, they cannot claim to be making pesto alla genovese, at least according to the Consorzio.

Considerations regarding ingredients and procedures lead up to our fifth question:

(5) Are there indispensable elements in a recipe, that is, elements without which the recipe would be disrupted (see Borghini 2011)?

Notice that the question asks about indispensable conditions for a specific recipe; we could raise also a parallel and more general question, namely, whether all recipes have some indispensable elements—e.g., the fact that they have to have some ingredients or that they have to lead up—if properly executed under favorable conditions—to a food. I discussed many conceptual nuances of this question in the previous section, when considering the elements that are key to the existence of recipes.

Question (5) finds parallels in other fields too. Can you execute Chopin's first piano concerto without a piano? Can you do it without a conductor? Or without cellos? When it comes to recipes, there are many plausible candidates to be counted as indispensable. Taste is a tempting initial option to consider. Bordini (in this volume) discusses at length the prospects of taste being considered as indispensable, reaching a skeptical conclusion (and, on this, see also Korsmeyer's chapter on recipes providing a taste of the past). Cognate notions of taste that may be regarded as key include after-taste (see Frischhut and Torrengo's chapter in this volume) as well as style (see Todd's chapter in this volume). Other obvious candidates are ingredients, as the examples of an ice-cream cone and French fries suggest. But, even with ingredients, one may wonder whether they seem only contextually indispensable. Does it take an animal to make meat or to make a dairy product? Possibly not (see also Wurgaft's chapter in this volume) and I shall leave the issue open. But, we could fancy that it does not take a "real" cone to make an ice-cream cone and it does not take "real" potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum*) to make French fries.

What about other candidates? We may cite the setting, as certain foods are meant to be shared from a plate (e.g., injera), or eaten with hands or with special tools (e.g., a crab cracker). Other foods—such as street food—may seem to depend upon place. Another interesting element is the *role in a meal*. For instance, a wedding cake plays a very specific function within a special meal, at least within some culinary traditions (see Charsley 1997): it must come at the end of the meal, be cut by the couple, and served to all guests. Without performing such functions, the cake cannot be considered a wedding cake. Or, consider *canapés* and *amouse bouches*, which are conceived to be served at the beginning of a meal. Of course, a cook may serve these items at later stages of a meal, but the question is: would they still be the same recipe?

Other interesting cases emerge when we consider recipes that have a value based on the action that the cook has to perform. For instance, this is the case with "handmade and homemade" recipes, which tend to be bestowed a special status. Thus, for instance, handmade and homemade tagliatelle may arguably be regarded as something other than machine-made tagliatelle bought off from a supermarket: the

two recipes share only part of their name, ditto for the dishes that they deliver. To offer another illustration, in the Japanese culinary context, to matter is not the end product, but rather the type and quality of the effort produced in delivering such end product (see White's paper in this volume). Finally, we may cite the case of fermented foods, whose recipe crucially rests on a certain relationship that establishes between the food and the producer (see Hey's chapter on this volume, which discusses the practice of making sake).

All these examples suggest that culinary cultures are filled with apparent obligations, norms directing diners as to how, when, with whom to consume the food and even how to produce it. But, the normative demands that people can make on a recipe are not by themselves proof that we are conceptually bound to claim that that recipe cannot exist unless those demands are met. The fact that most people expect an ice-cream cone to be served in a cone may not be enough to prove that, unless it is, it is not any longer an ice-cream cone. How far should one go? Is one willing to claim that a bowl of amatriciana could be served in a pill, which provides an analogous gastronomic experience to the "real" pasta? As these points demonstrate, a thorough investigation into the relationship between culinary norms and conceptual limits of the culinary entities involved is needed.

Is It Possible to Arrange Recipes into Taxonomies?

There are so many recipes that it becomes imperative to try and sort them out in some way or other. Recipe books, repositories, and archives typically organize them by kinds, such as soups, salads, sandwiches, or desserts. But we could also group recipes based on many other criteria: the procedures that they share (e.g., whether they require, at some point of the process, frying, baking, or freezing the food); the types of ingredients that they involve (e.g., vegan recipes, seasonal recipes, regional recipes); their nutritional values (e.g., low-calorie recipes, low-sugar recipes, energy-boost recipes); their socio-economic profile (e.g., family recipes, gourmet recipes); their national profile (e.g., Mexican recipes, Lebanese recipes); and so on.

In fact, these attempts at ordering the universe of recipes may contribute to generate the opposite impression—that such universe is actually an ontological jungle. Is there any hope to find some order in this jungle? Or, to put it more formally:

(6) Is it possible to arrange recipes into taxonomies?

Consider, for example, pizza. Talking about the eating preferences of Min, a speaker may note: "Min likes pizza, especially marinara, with extra red pepper." By uttering this sentence, the speaker is actually utilizing some implicit taxonomy: among all pizzas (the most general taxon), Min likes pizza marinara (a taxon included under pizza) and, among the latter, Min likes pizza marinara with extra red pepper (a taxon included under pizza marinara). Now compare this sentence with: "Min likes flowers, especially mimosa (*Acacia dealbata*) flowers, with large and bright flower-heads." The latter would describe Min's preferences with respect to a specific taxonomic ordering: among

all plants producing flowers, Min likes mimosa, in a specific moment of its seasonal development. Could we bring recipes to be arranged in taxonomies that are as cogent as those used for living entities?

Biological taxa supposedly track down causal features of living entities (even though the extent within which they do so is questionable; see, e.g., Ereshefsky 2000). Which causal features could taxonomies for recipes track down? We do have some plausible candidates here, emerging from the hard sciences: metabolic processes; cooking techniques; environmental impact; material features of the end product, such as consistency, perishability, taste-properties. Depending on the reasons we have for employing a taxonomy, we can pick a set of those causal features or another.

This set of causal features of recipes, however, leaves out important roles that recipes play in our lives. Recipes are shaped by and do shape socio-economic conditions, identities that connote political orientation, religion, gender, race, community, ethical values, aesthetic values, and so on. It is important, then, to include also taxonomies that track down the causal features of soft sciences.

The answer to question (6), hence, may begin by remarking that we can arrange recipes in taxonomies based on some set of causal features borrowed from hard and soft sciences. Which sets of features are to avoid and which ones seem most promising remain, however, to be ascertained.

It is worthwhile also to mention at least another conceptual difficulty related to taxonomies, namely the fact that they vary from one culinary context to another. To stay with the example of pizza, the taxonomies of pizza one finds in menus in Italy and in the United States arguably do not align. While in Italy a marinara is regarded as a low-level taxon of pizza (the equivalent of a species in the Linnean hierarchy), in the United States a marinara could be made in one of many styles—e.g., New York-, Chicago-, Miami-, New England-, Buffalo-style (each of which would be the equivalent of a species in the Linnean hierarchy). Or, consider cookies. In the United States, *biscotti* and cookies are two separate taxa, both falling under biscuits; in Italy, instead, biscotti and cookies are part of the very same taxon. Other typical misalignments may regard the culinary role of the food, for instance, whether a tomato is regarded as a fruit or as a vegetable in the specific context, or whether a cheese is regarded as a dessert or as an appetizer.

These sorts of distinctions become important once we trade food products between countries. Thus, for instance, a company producing biscotti in Italy, where they are referred to as a type of cookies also on the package, cannot arguably refer to them as "cookies" in the United States market.

Who Has the Authority to Determine the Existence and the Identity Conditions of a Recipe?

In March 2015, BuzzFeed published a video of just over three minutes titled "Mexican People Try Taco Bell for the First Time," which as of March 7, 2021 has been watched over 19 million times only on the *YouTube* channel run by BuzzFeed. In this unverified video, a number of Mexicans scrutinize Taco Bell's tacos, discussing their taste and

authenticity, while eating them for the first time. The recording is part of a popular series of videos dedicated to questioning the cultural authenticity of food served in well-known restaurant chains. The intended tone of the series is entertaining. But, they betray an underlying delicate question: who has the authority to decide whether or not Taco Bell makes tacos? Could Mexican people object to the fact that Taco Bell claims to be selling tacos? Could they object to the very name Taco Bell? Hence, a more general question that deserves closer theoretical attention:

(7) Who has the authority to determine the existence and the identity of a recipe?

To illustrate a bit further the importance of the matter, we can consider also the case of geographical indications, e.g., products such as Champagne, Parmigiano Reggiano, Darjeeling tea. In these instances, producers must conform their recipes to a series of guidelines referred to as a "disciplinary of production" established by a consortium. The body has the authority to determine whether the end product is or is not deserving to be called "Champagne," "Parmigiano," or "Darjeeling." Now, elaborating on the videos by BuzzFeed and playing a bit the devil's advocate, one may note that Mexican cuisine is protected under the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage and, therefore, Mexican traditional recipes—such as tacos—should be protected (see also Engisch's chapter in this volume on the representational powers of traditional foods). If the label "Champagne," at least within the boundaries of the European Union, can be reserved only to wines produced according to certain standards, why not claim that also the label "tacos" should be reserved only to foods produced in accordance with certain standards?

An entry point into questions of authority rests on the concept of authoriality: who can be regarded as the author of a recipe and, in what ways, authors are linked to the exercise of an authority to determine the identity of a recipe and of its end product? Borghini & Gandolini (2020) suggest that authoriality takes four different forms, based on the kinds of recipes that are under consideration: (i) *open recipes*, like pizza margherita or soft vegetarian tacos, where the authoriality seems to be open to interpretation for potentially any user; (ii) *geographical indications*, where each member within a consortium is bestowed special authority; (iii) *brand recipes*, where the recipes to make a certain branded product (e.g., Nutella or Coca-Cola) may be kept secret and managed by the company through the branding of the end product; and (iv) *signature dishes*, where the chef—not even line cooks—is arguably the ultimate author of the dish.

Regardless of how many and what kinds of authors a recipe may have, another issue remains: how is such authority exercised? Borghini (2015) suggests that a recipe requires a performative utterance on the part of the cook. Yet, do performatives require a public context? What if the cook is the only one who will ever see the food? Think, for instance, of the case of a prisoner on an island who is cooking a last meal, having no possibility of leaving a trace of what they cook. Or, imagine a cook who possesses no linguistic abilities having grown on a deserted island but who ends up being a really good cook. Hirvonen (in this volume) rightly questions the need for a performative to claim the identity of a recipe and more needs to be said in regard to this point.

Disentangling the riddles of authoriality and authority is key to resolve a wide range of disputes involving recipes and food, including those concerning cultural heritage and cultural appropriation (see the chapter by Barnhill and Bonotti in this volume), and intellectual property rights over signature dishes (see the chapter by Bonadio and Weissenberger in this volume).

Conclusion

The seven questions I have presented here do not of course exhaust all the conceptual issues that have arisen and that will arise about recipes. They rather absolve three other functions. First, they prove that recipes and culinary items can be a rich terrain of study not only for ethicists, aestheticians, or political philosophers, but also for philosophers with a theoretical inclination. Second, they model a role that theoretically inclined philosophers can play within the broader community of scholars and practitioners who are invested in studying food, namely, to rethink and negotiate key conceptual aspects. Finally, they suggest in what ways the chapters contained in this volume jointly contribute to foster the study of recipes from a philosophical angle.