

The Aesthetics of French Pastries:
A Cultural and Historical Account of Pâtisserie in Paris

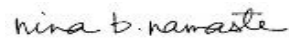
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I. Introduction and Ethnography

Culture, the basis of this study, is the customs and social institutions of a particular group of people. Cultural values revolve around the core principles and ideals upon which a society exists and continues to pass through generations. The physical aspects of culture, like cuisine, are reflections of these cultural values, which create feelings of identity and belonging. For example, in France, cuisine is a significant element of cultural history necessary for understanding the foundational values upon which the country is built, like tradition and national identity. However, in the United States, due to its cultural emphasis on capitalism and consumerism of all goods and services, which leads to the standardization of markets and consumer tastes, cuisine is not imperative to understanding the nation's cultural values. As countries around the world become more interconnected and international mobility becomes more accessible, "authentic" cuisines are adapted to the cultural contexts in which they are found. An exceptional example of this can be seen in how the contrasting cultural values in France and in the United States variously affect the visual presentation of French pastries, in Paris versus in New York City created by French pastry chefs.

Paris

During the spring of 2021, I spent five months living and studying in Paris. I lived in the 7e arrondissement with a host family and attended classes in both the 6e and 7e arrondissements. For class, I spent time all around Paris at museums and exhibits, which gave me time to explore new areas of the city. Aside from my time spent in French courses or with my host family, I was consumed by the food culture of Paris, especially the pâtisseries. Breakfast and lunch each day consisted of viennoiseries, sandwiches, and dessert pastries. Every free moment I had was

allotted to exploring and eating. I would visit a boulangerie at least once a day, six to seven days a week, which added up to around 100 pâtisserie visits covering Paris's 42 square miles over the course of the semester. While I was in Paris, I interviewed a French pastry chef that was preparing to open his own pâtisserie. As an American collecting ethnographic data in Paris, I faced many social limitations as I was a cultural outsider. Although I blended in as much as possible with my clothing and attitude around the city, the language barrier proved to be a difficult setback when attempting to authentically experience a pâtisserie in Paris. I was still able to immerse myself as much as possible in the city and in the culture through the help of classes, my host family, and experiences. With all of my time and energy dedicated to understanding Parisian pâtisserie culture, I have distinguished three types of pâtisseries offering four categories of pastries throughout Paris, which are all deeply grounded in the values of tradition, national identity, and authenticity.

In Paris, a pâtisserie can be found at nearly every street corner, typically housing pastries from each of the four types of traditional French pastries: puff pastry, choux pastry, shortcrust, and confections. Shortcrust is actually the oldest recorded form of pastry as it was used for savory tarts in the Middle Ages (Wheaton 25). Shortcrust pastries include *tarte citron*, *tarte framboise*, and *tarte au chocolat*. In the sixteenth century, choux pastry is believed to have been invented by Catherine de Medici's chef, Popelini (32). Choux pastry has since given rise to a multitude of French classics, like *éclairs*, *croquembouche*, and the *Paris-Brest*. Puff pastry, which is the base for desserts such as *croissants*, *pain au chocolat*, and *palmiers*, was introduced to Europe in the Middle Ages by soldiers fighting in the crusades, but it did not take on modern forms until much later. In the seventeenth century, the *croissant*, which was the perfect accompaniment for New World beverages like tea, coffee, and cocoa, was invented in Vienna,

introduced to Paris through an Austrian bakery, and quickly adapted and perfected by French chefs. In Paris, there are three types of pâtisseries: (1) bakeries that only offer a selection of traditional French pastries, as mentioned above; (2) bakeries that offer both a selection of traditional French pastries and a new, nontraditional element that is typically based on aesthetic appeal; (3) and bakeries that offer only a single, specialized pastry that uses traditional methods with a nontraditional appearance.

Traditional

Residing in the 2e arrondissement, Paris's oldest pâtisserie, Stohrer, is a prime example of the first type of pastry shop. It is the embodiment of the traditional pâtisserie in Paris as it offers the classic selection of each of the four types of pastries. It was a quaint little shop with Parisians of all ages and genders flowing in and out. Although from the outside this pâtisserie looks similar to others with chic, extravagant desserts lining the shop windows, the interior was long and narrow, with a seemingly never-ending display of elegant pastries. A beautiful painting of a woman between two large mirrors adorned the wall behind the counter. Pastry chefs were emerging from the kitchen behind the counter to restock pastries as several other chefs tended to customers attempting to order in front of various pastry sections along the counter. Boxes of viennoiseries and confections were being packaged and handed swiftly over the counter before customers were being shooed out the door by the fast-paced environment. I ordered a baba au rhum, which is a sponge cake soaked in rum with dried fruits for around 5,50€. This is a classic pastry for which Stohrer is known. Adorned with a vibrant red maraschino cherry, the glistening oblong cake, squishy with rum sat tauntingly inside of the intricate box. The sharp twang of alcohol filled my nose, cut by the sweetness of the little cake. Using the provided mini wooden

fork, I carved out my first bite. The spongy cake dissolved in my mouth and filled my chest with the burning of alcohol. This centuries-old pastry from the oldest pâtisserie in Paris was a reflection of the tradition that allowed both the pastry and the culture of the pâtisserie to exist even in the 21st century.

Neighborhood pâtisseries are also great representations of traditional bakeries. These pastry shops are typically locally-owned and operated with little variation outside of the traditional. For example, in the 7^e arrondissement, the pâtisserie a block away from the apartment in which I lived during my time in Paris offered only basic breakfast pastries, like *croissants* or *pain au chocolat*, classic tarts, standard choux pastries, such as *éclairs*, and small confections, like *madeleines* or *millefeuilles*. It was a quaint pâtisserie with the width of a metro car but no more than half the length, typically tended to by a young girl behind the counter, with rarely more than two customers inside at one time. Soft, warm lighting highlighted the baguettes and sourdough lining the back wall behind the register while a long display case ran along the length of the pâtisserie, nearly empty with the exception of a few tarts, croissants, and confections by the time I visited in the evenings. I would regularly order the light, dainty chocolate *éclair* chocolate ganache neatly glazing the top of the pastry for around 3,00€ on my way home from school. The soft choux dough would collapse under my teeth and the slightly bitter cocoa filling would ooze into my mouth while the sweet chocolate glaze coated my tongue. Little flecks of cocoa could be seen throughout the custard that had been piped into the thin, light dough. This neighborhood pâtisserie is representative of the ambiance, size, and selection of nearly all traditional pâtisseries in Paris, with a basic selection of the four types of pastries.

Traditional-Unique

The second type of pâtisserie is slightly harder to find in Paris than the first. The combination of traditional and nontraditional pastries simultaneously resists and respects the cultural norms of France by offering both those pastries that fit the expectation of typical French pastries and those that challenge those expectations. Boulangerie Utopie, an unassuming pâtisserie with a sleek outside and traditional displays of pastries and bread lit with warm yellow lighting greeting customers inside, resides in the 11^e arrondissement. Trained predominantly female waitstaff were prepared to welcome customers and answer any pâtisserie questions. An organized line formed around the counter to create a flow of consumers in one door and out the other on the opposite end of the store. Utopie offers a selection of both common French pastries and unique-traditional pastries. Pastries like croissants, pain aux raisins, and éclairs at Boulangerie Utopie are made with charcoal, giving them a dark gray or black appearance. In between traditionally-made pastries were their black and sesame-covered counterparts, sprinkled throughout the display case. Although the charcoal does not alter the taste, this presents a stark contrast in the display cases between the traditional pastries and the altered pastries, catching the eye of customers and bringing a new element to classic French pâtisserie.

Another example of this type of pâtisserie is Du Pain et des Idées, a pâtisserie in the 10^e arrondissement in Paris. Du Pain et des Idées looks similar to Stohrer both externally and internally, with intricate marbling and gold detailing that gives the shop an ancient feel. The mirrors on the back wall create the illusion of size in the petite pastry shop. The pâtisserie appears traditional on the surface, but upon closer look, there is one unique pastry dispersed throughout the display cases: a flavored *pain aux raisins*. Du Pain et des Idées's version of a classic *pain aux raisins* includes the addition of pistachio, giving the pastry a green glow through its spiral. The base of the pastry remains true to the traditional *pain aux raisins*, but the sweet

pistachio paste rolled into the pastry provide a rich nutty flavor that is cut by the bittersweetness of the chocolate chips. The selection at Du Pain et des Idées reflects the tradition and national identity of French cuisine through the selection of typical pastries but continues to push the boundaries by offering a new, flavored version of a classic pastry. Neither Du Pain et des Idées nor Boulangerie Utopie offer anything inherently *untraditional*—it is more of a unique variation of traditional French pâtisserie.

Specialized

The third type of pâtisserie in Paris revolves around the specialization of one particular pastry. A variety of traditional pastries are not offered at this type of bakery. Within these pastry shops, although they are nontraditional in nature, the elements offered follow traditional French technique with a unique aspect, like flavor variation or pastry type. Aux Merveilleux de Fred is a pâtisserie that only offers *merveilleux*, which are a new type of pastry, relative to other French pastries, made of crushed meringue and whipped cream. The pâtisserie has a stark black exterior with daunting steps that lead into one large room—the kitchen is open to be seen by the public, so it is part of the experience in ordering the merveilleux. A large chandelier hung from the ceiling as chefs were working quickly to produce the six flavors of merveilleux fresh for customers. Aux Merveilleux de Fred, as well as other specialized pâtisseries, offer views from the street into the pâtisserie of the pastry chefs creating the pastries, as well as a display window within the bakery in which the customer can watch the chefs create their specific pastry. This window establishes trust between consumer and chef as the pastry offered in this situation is not typical of French pâtisserie. The *merveilleux* cake coated in chocolate shavings smelled like sweet whipped cream as I opened the to-go pastry box. As I

eagerly dug in with my little wooden fork, my mouth was met with the airy, soft whipped cream and a little crunch from the crushed meringue and the chocolate shavings. The subtle flavor of chocolate complimented the profound sweetness of the cream and meringue chunks. These pastries are not inherently unique in their ingredients or techniques as chefs use basic French techniques to create them, but rather in their construction and appearance.

Famous pâtissiers, like Pierre Hermé and Louis Ernest Ladurée, gained recognition through their expertise and specialization of macarons around and beyond Paris. These types of pâtisseries, although untraditional, survive in Paris because they follow traditional French techniques precisely while providing distinctive, delectable and unique variations of pastries. Another example of this is Odette, a pâtisserie near Notre Dame that offers a selection of flavors of cream puffs. Odette is hidden on a petite side street just barely away from the action of bustling central Paris. Its unassuming outside is adorned with a black and white awning with flowers boxes embellishing the three stories of windows above the door. The space was narrow, with the left side of the store taken up by a long case of perfectly aligned rows of cream puffs and a spiral staircase disappearing upwards in the right corner. One shop worker was prepared behind the counter to tend to customers, but it was a quiet day with no more than one customer present at a time. After much deliberation, I settled on praline, passionfruit, vanilla, chocolate, pistachio, and raspberry as my six flavors. The fluffy pastries with a crackled appearance on the outside were served on a skinny plate, lined up with thin slices of fondant to correspond with the flavors of the individual pastries. The plate of pastries consumed my nose with a subtle sweetness. Slicing into each delicate pastry one at a time revealed the intense colors of cream that matched the fondant on the outside. The light choux pastry had a flavor of just a touch of sweetness to compliment the most memorable flavor: the energetic, tart raspberry cream. With

each bite, the pastry cream exploded with flavor and melted in my mouth. The taste of each cream puff was so strong and pure. Although cream puffs are considered a traditional French pastry, Odette provided a unique experience of the pastry with vibrant displays and compelling flavors, which is a perfect example of a specialized pâtisserie respecting the French cultural value of tradition by utilizing traditional French techniques with a unique result.

Of the three types of pâtisserie, each continues to utilize French techniques and ingredients, even those that offer unique products relative to traditional pastries. Each of the three types of pâtisseries offer at least one of the four categories of pastry, which demonstrates the cultural norms among pastry production and the expectation of quality and standardization among pastry consumers. Traditional, unique-traditional, and specialized pâtisseries are all rooted in a foundation of rich national identity around cuisine in France, which has created a sense of tradition and a push for authenticity.

New York City

In the United States, specifically in New York City, the three types of pâtisseries do not exist. In the fall of 2022, after my time in Paris, I spent a week exploring New York City's selection of French pastries at four French-owned pastry shops. I collected field notes and observation data from each of the four sites that I visited, one of which was a famous pastry shop while the other three were average neighborhood bakeries. I conducted two interviews with French pâtissiers who practice in the United States. In the United States, collecting ethnographic data had fewer social limitations than in Paris because, although the chefs were still of French background, the interviews were conducted in English and the primary language spoken to customers at pastry shops in New York City was English. I was no longer working as an outsider

of the cultural norms and systems in place when conducting research in New York City.

Although I did not face cultural barriers in the United States, I experienced logistical setbacks in the lack of French pâtisseries owned and operated by French pastry chefs and the short timeframe for which I was in New York City. However, these difficulties did not prevent me from collecting extensive data on the visual aesthetics of the pastries and the influence of the national values of the United States.

In New York City, it's rare, if not impossible, to walk into a "French" pâtisserie and find the traditional selection you could find on every street in Paris. Even bakeries that present as having the traditional selection of pastries are either lacking in one or more of the four types of pastries or are offering a new variation of a traditional French pastry. For example, Le Fournil, a French-owned and operated pâtisserie in Lower East Side Manhattan, transports the customer to France with a rustic French flag painted on the outside of the shop and long, full display cases of nearly every pastry imaginable. However, Le Fournil offers two types of pastries that would not be found in Paris: (1) flavor variations of croissants, like hazelnut or raspberry, featuring beautiful, colorful lamination to illustrate the uniqueness of the pastries, and (2) croissant pretzels, twisted into elegant knots and laminated with colors to represent flavor, similarly to the croissants. Although the croissants have a delicate buttery flavor with subtle, tart raspberry highlighted in each bite, this seemingly traditional French pastry shop sprinkles in ideas and depictions of the inventiveness and commercialism valued in the United States but necessary for the pâtisserie's survival.

As I mentioned before, Dominique Ansel Bakery is a prime example of this commercialism in a French pâtisserie in the United States. Dominique Ansel offers cronuts with new flavors each month designed to look like beautiful confections fit for magazines and internet

posts. The colors and flavors draw crowds from around the world with lines around the city blocks of New York that last hours. In October 2022, I had the privilege of visiting Dominique Ansel Bakery and attaining the monthly cronut: tart cherry jam and cappuccino ganache filling with a sweet cappuccino icing on top. The pastry itself was light, flaky and crispy, but the filling made the croissant hybrid dense and creamy. The cronut is definitely an experience to be desired if you're in New York City. Dominique Ansel Bakery also offers a limited selection of French pastries, like croissants, kouign amanns, and confections, but the attraction of the pastries revolves around flashy colors, bright displays, delicate constructions. This ties back to the values of the United States, as Dominique Ansel is a French pastry chef that moved to the United States to develop his craft and open his own bakery.

Traditional French pâtisseries in the United States are not successful because they are not serving the greater sociocultural needs. In France, tradition is a deep-rooted value upon which the French built their society and established a national cuisine. In my interviews with French pastry chefs, those that practiced their craft in the United States described the desire to remain faithful to French technique and tradition while finding it necessary to adapt their products to satisfy American consumers. The values that keep traditional French pâtisseries afloat and successful in Paris do not hold the same weight in the United States. These differing value systems require a varied approach to presenting French pastries to the public in both places upon which the cultural values are capitalized.

The historical culinary contexts that allow French pâtisserie to exist and flourish in France are not present in the United States. United States culinary history is much newer, its origins traceable to the 20th century. The efforts by American companies in France are reflective of French chefs moving to the U.S. These chefs are forced to adapt to their surroundings,

appease the American desire of new, bright, outrageous—forcing the development of hybrid French pastries and wild flavor combinations. One pastry chef explained in an interview: “You may be from a country with traditions that you want and need to respect but you are hosted by a new and different country. The respect you land for your own tradition have [sic] to coincide with the respect of traditions of the country you are [sic] decided to join,” which describes the desire to honor the traditions upon which French chefs are raised and trained while also needing to adapt to American ideals for the sake of maintaining a successful business in which their consumer audience desires are met. Similarly, another French pastry chef said, “I need to make sure I respect tradition and the way each dish has been created and lasting in France but at the same time we have a business to run and whatever needs to be done with no cheating and to make sure that the door keeps opening and there is money coming in no matter what my ideals are.” This quote revolves around the same ideas as that of the previous chef, which explains the need to adapt to American culture while remaining true to French values and traditions as much as possible.

Without the inventions of hybrid pastries, French chefs would not survive in the United States because there is no deep culinary foundation around tradition upon which *pâtisserie* could stand. *Pâtisseries* in the United States rely upon a concept known as staged authenticity, which means products are designed to fit the expectation of the consumer rather than remaining truly authentic. In this case, this means French pastries in New York City are merely reflections of what consumers believe French pastries to be, rather than what French pastries actually are. In an interview with a French pastry chef practicing in the United States, he said, “I mean I tend to agree with what you were saying about what brings Americans to French pastry shops is...what’s not ordinary,” which affirms the idea that French pastry chefs in the United States

aspire to create exciting, hybrid variations of French pâtisserie to draw in the American crowd. Dominique Ansel's pastries are an example of pastries that reflect the traditional techniques of French pâtisserie with major flavor and appearance alterations appeal to American consumers. Traditional pâtisserie would crumble under the lack of appreciation of French tradition, which is what keeps them afloat in France. The values of tradition and a culinary national identity in France creates a space for pastries to follow rigid traditional expectations and guidelines, while in the United States the values of consumerism and innovation allow pastries to be created with flexibility to fit the expectations of the American consumer. Because of these contrasting cultural values, French pastries appear visually different in both Paris and New York City.

II. French Food History and Cultural Values

In France, national identity and tradition are strong cultural values that affected the history of cuisine. The French developed an identity based around their regional and national cuisines, becoming the leaders of culinary progress around the world. These values, interwoven into the history of French cuisine, produced a desire for authenticity and quality of culinary production. National identity and tradition cannot be understood separate from French culinary history.

In the Middle Ages, France's political and social system was referred to as the *Ancien Regime* in which the church and nobility ruled over the country. As Barbara Wheaton, author of "Savoring the Past" notes, during this period, food was a demonstration of wealth and power. Royalty staged lavish banquets and festivals as a public expression of status. Often, these banquets were attended by lower classes as a spectacle to watch the affluent eat and celebrate.

For this reason, the food at these festivals was not concerned with flavor but with appearance. The basics of pâtisserie were present in the Middle Ages but were unrefined. Although pastries and the practice of pâtisserie existed, they were not widely recognized due to their exclusivity and difficulty acquiring ingredients. Meals were brought out all at once in large, shareable dishes but were consumed based on rank. These practices continued into the beginning of the sixteenth century, until the textualization of recipes and implementation of table manners.

Up to this point in history, chefs were sharing recipes orally, making them widely unavailable to the public. With the development of written recipes and techniques, elite individuals that could afford literary education but were not quite wealthy enough to be a part of the nobility were beginning to have access to high-class French recipes. Food was becoming a crucial means of social and economic exchange. Chefs continued to pass their craft orally, but standards in the kitchen were raised to stay ahead of the newfound accessibility. Pâtisserie, along with the rest of French cuisine, experienced a shift toward emphasis on skills, techniques, and flavors, rather than just appearance. Textualizing French cuisine permitted country-wide transmission of information around food that was previously exclusive to the nobility, but this textualization was not the same for pâtisserie. Because the craft of pastry cooking was less unified than other aspects of French cuisine, most pâtissiers were a part of separate guilds in which there was little written instruction.

Catherine de Medici's marriage to French King Henry II altered the spread of French cuisine as well. Following Henry II's and her oldest son's death, Catherine de Medici became regent as the next heir to the throne, Charles IX, was only ten years old. Five years later, she and Charles IX conducted a grand tour of France which consisted of traveling festivals around the entire country. The Royal Tour of France was a political move to muster support for the

monarchy, but the grand festivals spread French cuisine of the nobility to all ends of France, further extending and unifying the influence of French food. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, sugar was still a commodity for the rich, so confectionary and pastries were exclusively elite. Often as well, these creations were displays of wealth and were inedible. During this period as well, France was undergoing a renaissance in which dining was experiencing a refinement of both tastes and manners. Wealthy diners were encouraged to consciously understand what foods they were consuming and how they were consuming them. Tables were beginning to have individual place settings with a multitude of utensils, plates, and cups, rather than communal dining experiences. Confectionary actually influenced elaborate table decorations and displays in this period. With the standardization of dining expectations emerged haute cuisine, a method of consumption relegated specifically to the wealth.

The characteristics of haute cuisine revolve around the centralization of the culinary elite in Paris, rather than splitting chefs and diners between the capital and Versailles. Paris became the central meeting place for France's culinary life. Regional cuisines were transported to Paris before being diffused back into different parts of the country. Because the French were representative of the elite before the French Revolution, this influenced much of aristocratic Europe. French was the language of the upper class during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. France also controlled the culinary realm, so their standards of hospitality, cooking methods, and ingredients were revered and followed around Europe. At the height of haute cuisine before the revolution, France was seeing deeper economic segregation of the upper class and an increase in exotic, expensive ingredients imported to satiate their palates.

The French Revolution completely altered the course of French culinary practices. At the end of the 18th century, France experienced a period of economic and social stability, which

benefited the culinary industry in a multitude of ways. Chefs reverted back to using simple ingredients from the various regions of France. Quality of ingredients and craftsmanship was valued over quantity of food present at the table. Most modern dessert and pâtisserie techniques were developed during this post-war period. Sweet and savory became separate, delineated flavor profiles, allowing for the two to have their own courses. Sweetness was delegated to the end of the meal, which provided a necessary organization to the order of dining and respecting the opposition of the two flavors. The revolution also influenced the expansion of food outside of the bourgeois, which opened dessert to a wider public audience.

Paris was solidified as the central meeting place of French goods and services after the fall of the monarchy. Sugar and sweet foods, which had dropped in price but were not available much outside of the city, were labeled as Parisian, which implied that they were upper-class goods. After the revolution, French values shifted toward commonality and attainability, allowing for the birth of individual pastries. This access to inexpensive foods that were previously for the elite gave the working class a sense of luxury and extravagance. This newfound accessibility among the lower classes encouraged the invention of the restaurant, which created a space for semi-public dining for the wealthy. Although dining was a public affair, public dining was still only available to the elite, privatized by an economic barrier. Once again, eating was a spectacle that divided those who were wealthy from those who were not. In restaurants, dining was intimate between diners and also communal as diners were typically of the same status. The serving style was also served in a more modern way with multiple courses, modeled after Russian-serving styles, which made dining participatory and engaging as consumers chose the dishes they wanted served. Dining experiences were also time-regulated to

create a sense of intimacy and individuality. This type of dining experience institutionalized the idea of gastronomy in France.

The *nouvelle cuisine* that is associated with post-revolutionary ideals shifted the dimensionality of classic French cuisine (Tebben, 16). French philosopher Brillat-Savarin coined the term gastronomy to describe the relationship between food and the nourishment of humans, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Gastronomy was the intellectual and social connection people experienced while dining with each other and with the food, which became distinctly French after the revolution. As ideology changed, gastronomy began to value all five senses. According to Brillat-Savarin's "Physiology of Taste," humans use all five senses in order to create connections with their surroundings (Brillat-Savarin, 21). This made dining in France not only a social experience shared with others, but it encouraged shared physical experiences with one another. The definition of gastronomy as a cultural system throughout the 19th century demonstrated the evolution of French cuisine. As chefs produced physical products in kitchens, diners consumed the products in a social manner through conversation, review, and debate. The two aspects of dining worked in tandem to solidify gastronomy as a prestigious aspect of French culture, elevating France onto the world stage in regards to cuisine.

Although there was an increase in the luxury of public sociability, dining experienced simplification after the French Revolution. Cuisine was becoming elite not because techniques were complicated and ingredients were expensive but because the elite were grasping for a more privatized dining experience in which their status could still be displayed. Pâtisserie defied the trajectory of this *nouvelle cuisine*. A refinement seen in baking equipment allowed pâtisserie to surpass dessert-making because pastry form improved with the refrigeration of butter and the availability of sugar (Tebben 19). With this, a distinction between pâtisserie and confectionery

appeared (15). Confectionary related to inedible, decorative creations, while pâtisserie was both edible and functional (15). Throughout the nineteenth century, pastries began to have common names, forms, and origin stories that created a shared history throughout France (18). With this turn, pâtisserie became revered and valued as much as standard cooking (18).

As Sarraon and Abramowitz-Moreau explain in “Paris Pâtisseries: History, Shops, and Recipes,” in the 20th century, Louis-Ernest Laudurée, combined a Parisian café with a pastry shop, inciting a major increase in individual pastry consumption (20). Pâtisserie has since moved away from using complex ingredients for a high-end product in order to focus on highlighting the strength of the primary ingredients: flour, eggs, sugar, and butter (71). Gaston Lenôte, considered the inventor of modern pâtisserie, completely changed the industry into something more attainable and recognizable (12). He pushed for a movement away from dense, old-fashioned French pastry by getting rid of inedible sugar decorations and additional, unnecessary materials (20). The evolution of desserts and pastries has forged an association between the two, and they are now predominantly interchangeable terms as both are typically created by the same chef or within the same types of shops (129). Pâtisserie is an exact science that requires a deep understanding of the ingredients and techniques but, with mastery, allows for creativity and innovation (89). Pierre Hermé, Lenôte’s student, emphasized the aesthetic importance of modern pâtisserie (81). He believed visual appeal to be as critical as flavor because it enhances the pleasure of the gastronomic experience (81).

Pâtisserie is an art that engages each of the five senses and is both an individual and shared experience (Brillat-Savarin, 21). The concept of dessert caters to the desire to feel luxurious and wealthy while also rejecting those very values in its accessibility and individuality (Tebben 21). Pastries are available for the broader public, but their nature of individuality gives

consumers a sense of choice and power. Their aesthetic appeal and presentation of technique gives consumers the feeling of eating something important, something expensive, even if the pastry is as simple as a croissant. The art of traditional pâtisserie has been perfected by French pastry chefs for centuries (Sarramon and Abramowitz-Moreau 95). Combining textures, creating harmony between flavors, and pleasing the eyes and the palate require skill and artistry (25). Pastries are intended to be shared experiences that evoke memories, catering to both the ideas of familiarity and almost unattainable extravagance (8). This concept and these shared experiences create a culture between individuals, groups, and societies, shaping the way people think and feel. The culture of these communities is a result of history and tradition, meaning past events and practices shape current ideals. The goal of modern pastry chefs is creativity and inventiveness while walking the fine line of tradition and national identity (95).

As French cuisine rose in prestige and value in France, it came to represent the French way of life, the values and social practices in France, and the country itself (Ferguson 1054). At the global scale, French gastronomy is often revered as exemplary for its culinary techniques. Food is a basic necessity of life, yet French chefs, in particular, have implemented luxurious aspects with the discovery and fusion of New and Old-World ingredients and techniques (Tebben 20). Food, as an expression of culture, represents societal values and is highly regarded in French society. Food is a cultural medium that can emphasize national boundaries and identities (DeSoucey 433). Those responsible for preparing and serving the food, those consuming the food, the ingredients they are consuming, and how those ingredients are prepared are all influential in shaping a society (Aktaş-Polat & Polat 286). France is a prime example of a national identity formulated around food. As I mentioned above, the development of written recipes and culinary information made Paris the central meeting point for all goods and services

in France. This meant that regional cuisines were being brought in to the capital before being redistributed back to the regions. This gave each region a sense of individual identity with cuisine and it nationalized the regional cuisines by putting them all in one place for diners to consume. The underlying cultural structures of a collective national identity and shared value of tradition in France provided a foundation upon which cuisine could stand in France, even before the popularization of pâtisserie. Cuisine, especially in France, is representative of social relationships within the culture (280). With the help of food, meals are shared in public and private and among families, friends, and strangers, which fosters a shared set of tastes and values within a specific society (280). This collective cultural medium emphasizes national boundaries and identities (DeSoucey 433). Cuisine is the perfect model for national unity because it exists beyond political and material bounds. It has created its own realm with which to define what it means to be French (Ferguson 1061).

The pride in regional identity can be attributed to the term *terroir*. *Terroir* is a French term defined as the combination of factors associated with food products, like amount and orientation of sunlight, soil pH and altitude, but *terroir* in France runs much deeper. It is a cultural phenomenon in the food industry in which there is a rich, almost sacred connection between the earth and crops. Because of the unique geographical features in each region in France, the same type of crop grown in any given region will taste different from place to place. This gives regions a sense of identity, pride and individuality. *Terroir* highlights the utilization of the relationship and significance of the natural world and agricultural production. This term and the ideas surrounding it give France a greater sense of both regional and national identity, especially with cuisine.

Cuisine is acknowledged as a key component in explaining what it means to be French, not only in France, but around the world (Ferguson 1053). Even though global communication has expanded, the relationship between Paris and France's regions is demonstrated between

France and the rest of the world, specifically the United States. In France, the borders between regions are blurred through trade, travel, and communication. Even though geographical lines may be blurred, the cultural and culinary distinctions between Paris and the regions of France become more distinct with trade. The same applies to France's relationship with other countries. Although global, geographical borders are blurred by globalization, the distinction between cultures is reemphasized by these relationships. As the regions of France are to Paris in the nineteenth century, Paris is to the United States in the 21st century. Paris acts as a cultural importing and exporting point for the regions of France and for the United States. With increased trade and communication, France struggles to label and maintain the authenticity of its cultural elements, especially with cuisine. The struggle for authenticity is ongoing, as French cuisine has evolved tremendously throughout France's history (Ferguson 1059).

France's emphasis on authenticity of regional and national cuisines revolves around cultural pride (Strohl 165). Methods and techniques of food preparation are culturally significant in France, so the authenticity of a dish prepared in a specific way is valued for its cultural importance (165). French food is crucial for the tourism industry because it provides economic benefits and fosters a sense of gastronomic identity for the region from which the food is being consumed (Gordon & Meunier 1). Authenticity of food can be determined through three factors: where the ingredients come from, how the dish was prepared, and where the dish was prepared (Strohl 158). For France, a pastry is only a French pastry if it was prepared in France, even if the other two categories have been met. Pastries constructed in the United States, even with French techniques and ingredients, are reflections of French pastries rather than being inherently French. This is due to the differing cultural values in the United States and the need to satisfy these

values in a new cultural context rather than maintaining the values of national identity and tradition.

III. United States Cuisine and Cultural Values

The United States values of capitalism, consumerism, and individualism begin to appear in the early 20th century. Early capitalism revolved around economic individualism, but the new wave of capitalism following the second World War resembled a planned economy, or an economy in which the state was attempting to achieve specific objectives (Antonio & Bonanno 36). After World War II, the United States entered a period of economic boom and mass production. The system of material production that the United States relied on cultural resources and deeply affected societal norms for years to come (35). The United States' history intertwined with European politics caused a resistance to similar economics, and the Great Depression and war period led to a push for intense work ethic and consumerism to match the intense level of production (35).

According to Antonio and Bonanno in "A New Global Capitalism? From 'Americanism and Fordism' to 'Americanization-Globalization,'" most major capitalist societies experienced a period of reconstruction after World War II, but the United States dominated the world market in the 1950s and 1960s, allowing for U.S. expansion through manufacturing (36). The United States experienced growth in city suburbs, highway systems, and with the help of a growing middle class that needed cars and appliances, forged a society of mass consumption (36). With the expansion of higher education, a new wave of managerial professions opened specialized opportunities for the middle class, military and corporate research grew, and new technology,

like the television, delivered consumerism to the doorsteps of American families across the country (36).

After a period of productivity and growth in the 1950s, the 1960s brought fragmentation, race riots, and inflation, causing Americans to question the new wave capitalism (37). Anti-Western movements became more prominent, threatening U.S. dominance and challenging ideas of modernization in the West (38). The economic and political turmoil faced in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s discouraged U.S. citizens and caused disinterest in the capitalist and consumerist values that had been instilled in them after World War II (39).

Manufacturing equipment, inefficient plants, and unemployment were the face of the late 1970s. Regions, like the Rust Belt, that were once booming were quickly on the decline. In the 1980s, neoliberalism became the new agenda for United States political figures because it stressed free markets and reduced the role of the state in the economy (41). This new “centerless capitalism” that supposedly empowered workers and dissolved hierarchies worked to integrate communities and families more efficiently into the economy with rapid distribution of goods and emphasis on autonomy (42).

In the 1990s, conversations of neoliberalism in the context of the new term “globalization” were brought to the table (44). Globalization, a concept that was not new to the late 20th century, was and had been entwined in the development and evolution of capitalism (45). After the Cold War and United States intervention in Iraq, a more globally integrated capitalism was possible because more areas were available for capitalist investment and production (45). But, with the end of the Cold War, economic inequalities became more prevalent as the United States began to emphasize their agenda in the “free world,” which allowed for economic growth and military dominance in the U.S (45).

With a stock-market boom in the late 1990s, optimistic views of the global reach of capitalism were paired with conversations about new technological inventions and improvements, like the internet (46). This period of economic prosperity fostered conversations about the need to dissolve the divided world with a global free market (48). The argument that the United States' new agenda was the most efficient and effective method for global interactions assumes that United States is a necessary force for economic growth and military safety for the good of the international realm (48). With the United States under the impression that their goods and services were needed for the good of the world, globalization took on an American template, driven by the economic and political structure in the U.S (49). Capitalism in the U.S. became fueled even more intensely by work ethic and a push for the highest and newest achievements (50).

Culturally, food is viewed as a commodity in the United States, just like any other purchasable item. There is no variation in the value of food other goods; therefore, food is not attached to any cultural significance in American culture. There is not a solid foundation of tradition and historical context upon which the United States could build a significant food culture. Rather, food is a reflection of the cultural values of capitalism and innovation that encompass the entirety of cultural goods in the U.S. This is opposite of what is seen in France, as France's national identity and core values have been created around the institutionalization of cuisine throughout the country.

IV. French Perspectives on United States Cultural Values

The French, who are strongly attached to their cultural identity, feel threatened by this new wave of U.S. capitalism that revolves around innovation and intense progress (Gordon and

Meunier 9). Dating back to World War I, the French criticized the mass culture and emphasis on material wealth of the United States (9). France is known for regionality and specialty foodstuffs, so their fears were heightened when the United States began encroaching on European trade and markets after World War I (Gordon and Meunier, *Trade, Culture, and Identity* 44). When American influence and power grew in Europe after the war, the French worried what the result may be (Gordon and Meunier, *How Globalization Challenges France* 9). Americanization occurs when globalization maintains an American façade with the help of the English language in culture and business, United States economy, the power of American military, and the patriotism of the United States, in which many see the country as a sort of model for the rest of the world (8). This term is necessary to define and understand in the context of globalization in France because many of the French view globalization and Americanization as the same thing or very tightly related (7).

Globalization is a point of contention in France because it requires the state to abandon control of the economic and political traditions, which directly challenges their societal structure (8). José Bové, a sheep farmer in southern France, helped dismantle the construction of a new McDonald's as a protest against United States trade sanctions against European products (1). This protest was not just for this McDonald's location specifically, but it came to symbolize the fear of the threat of globalization, or Americanization, in France (2). It stimulated the debate about the benefits and harms of rapid and extensive communication and economic, cultural, and technological exchange (2).

French politicians and intellectuals listened to José Bové, forcing the issue into the public light (3). The action taken by both protestors as well as political figures are not just to appease individual voters and internal affairs in France—they also act in shaping the worldview of France

(3). Many French politicians have enacted policies to limit globalization, but many fast-food restaurants are prevailing in the French economy despite these efforts (42-43). Food is an intense source of pride for the French, so the French government has stepped in to preserve the cultural diversity in relation to food (53).

In 1959, Charles de Gaulle, French president at the time, established a Ministry of Culture and created the Maisons de la Culture in which French culture was preserved, celebrated, and promoted (45). Nearly all French leaders have agreed that preservation of cultural heritage and diversity is necessary to combat or endure globalization (3). The French are not only concerned about the preservation of their culture but the disappearance of France itself because globalization and the homogenization of cultures threatens France's values and traditions (41). Today, these same sentiments and fears are rapidly reemerging in the face of new technologies and the ideology of free trade, making culture susceptible to the influence of the United States (9). There is a widespread belief in France that the homogenization that has happened with the economy and with trade should not happen with cuisine, as cuisine is one the most crucial pieces of the French identity (55).

Although France deeply resists globalization on the surface, they are also benefiting from it through their economy, society, and political system. On the surface, cultural preservation appears to be the most critical part of what it means to be French, but France is adapting to Americanization and globalization much more than one may realize (4). Though globalization is seemingly bad for France's unique values and culture, it also serves to spread and enrich French culture globally (43). Most of the French are not entirely opposed to globalization, but slightly wary (Gordon and Meunier, *The French Response: Managing Globalization* 98). Globalization is inevitable and can be beneficial, but many believe it should be contained and managed (98).

These intense efforts by France to ward off the results of globalization and protect their heritage can be directly reflected in French pastries. The French so deeply resist Americanization, especially when it comes to their culinary identity. Pâtisseries and boulangeries in France are built on tradition, each one that is authentically French serves the same pastries, wherever you are in Paris. Each of the three types of pâtisseries utilizes traditional French techniques, even if the pastry that results is new and unique. This is representative of the national values which run deep throughout French culinary culture: national identity, tradition, and authenticity.

V. Conclusions

In the United States, French pastries do not have the cultural infrastructure to exist based on the social structures that are (or are not) valued. Pâtisserie in the United States revolves around the pastry chefs rather than the pastries. French pastry chefs practicing in New York City are obliged to create French pastries that reflect the cultural values of the United States. Throughout the United States, this looks like croissant-hybrid pastries or inventive flavors of pastries advertised with bright colors or an absence of traditional pastries at all. In New York, chef Dominique Ansel developed the cronut, which is the combination of a croissant and doughnut. In San Francisco, the cruffin, a croissant-muffin hybrid, was trademarked and popularized by Mr. Holmes Bakehouse. In the 1970s, croissant sandwiches were commercialized by major breakfast companies in the United States. Today, variations of croissants continue to be altered, filled, reshaped, and reinvented.

In France, although there is a presence of unique pâtisseries with new flavors or inventions, the underlying values of tradition and a national identity associated with cuisine are shown through the standardization of techniques. Each of the three types of pâtisseries maintain

and respond to the cultural norms within Paris by providing at least one form of traditional pâtisserie, even though some are presented as new variations. Authenticity, national identity, and tradition work in tandem to create the ideal environment for the existence of French pâtisserie because they allow for pastry techniques to remain culturally significant, especially among cuisine. Pastries are the embodiment of France's values as well as a reflection of the dynamic nature of culture. For this reason, the visual presentation of French pastries is reliant on the cultural values of the location in which the pastries are created. French pastries in the United States and French pastries in France are likely to be presented differently as, although both are French pastries created by French pastry chefs, they are a reflection of cultural standards in both countries.

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