



## The phenomenon of “gastics” in intercultural communication

EL FENÓMENO DE LOS “GASTICS” EN  
LA COMUNICACIÓN INTERCULTURAL

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### Resumen

El propósito de este estudio fue explorar las funciones simbólicas y comunicativas de la comida como medio de interacción intercultural, así como determinar

cómo las tradiciones gastronómicas nacionales influyen en la formación de la identidad cultural en el contexto de la globalización. El estudio se centró en las prácticas gastronómicas de diferentes países, como China, Corea, Japón, Turquía, Asia Central (Kazajistán, Uzbekistán), Europa (Grecia, Italia, España, Francia, Gran Bretaña, Alemania, Escandinavia, Ucrania) y Estados Unidos, y analizó cómo los platos nacionales se convierten en símbolos del patrimonio cultural y la interacción social. El estudio examinó el significado simbólico de los platos nacionales y festivos en diferentes culturas, así como su papel en los rituales y los lazos sociales. Se prestó especial atención a cómo la globalización afecta la difusión de las tradiciones gastronómicas, adaptándolas a otras culturas, y cómo los medios de comunicación y el turismo gastronómico contribuyen a la popularización de los platos nacionales en todo el mundo. El análisis también abarcó los conflictos que pueden surgir de las diferencias culturales en el consumo de alimentos y los comportamientos en la mesa, y su impacto en la comunicación intercultural. Los principales hallazgos del estudio demostraron que la comida es una herramienta importante para la comunicación intercultural, ya que permite mantener los lazos sociales y transmitir significados culturales a través de las comidas compartidas. También se constató que las tradiciones gastronómicas desempeñan un papel significativo en la preservación de la identidad nacional, especialmente en el contexto de la globalización, cuando los platos tradicionales se adaptan a nuevos contextos culturales. Asimismo, el estudio destacó la importancia de los medios de comunicación y el turismo gastronómico como medios para difundir el conocimiento sobre otras culturas a través de la comida, lo que promueve el intercambio cultural y facilita la comprensión intercultural.

### Palabras clave

Diálogo intercultural, etiqueta, antropología, cultura gastronómica, platos nacionales.

### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the symbolic and communicative functions of food as a means of intercultural interaction, as well as to determine how national gastronomic traditions influence the formation of cultural identity in the context of globalization. The study focused on the gastronomic practices of different countries, such as China, Korea, Japan, Turkey, Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan), Europe (Greece, Italy, Spain, France, Great Britain, Germany, Scandinavia, Ukraine) and the United States, and analysed how national dishes become symbols of cultural heritage and social interaction. The study examined the symbolic meaning of national and festive dishes in different cultures, as well as their role in rituals and social ties. Particular attention was paid to how globalization affects the spread of gastronomic traditions, adapting them to other cultures, and how the media and gastro-tourism contribute to the popularization of national dishes around the world. The analysis also covered the conflicts that can arise from cultural differences in food consumption and table behaviour and their impact on intercultural communication. The main findings of the study showed that food is an important tool for intercultural communication, as social ties are maintained, and cultural meanings are transmitted through shared meals. It was also found that gastronomic traditions play a significant role in preserving national identity, especially in the context of globalization, when traditional dishes are adapted to

new cultural contexts. At the same time, the study highlighted the importance of media and gastro-tourism as a means of spreading knowledge about other cultures through food, which promotes cultural exchange and facilitates intercultural understanding.

## Keywords

Intercultural dialogue, etiquette, anthropology, gastro-culture, national dishes.

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## 1. Introduction

The topic of intercultural communication through gastronomic traditions is of considerable scientific interest due to the ability of food to perform social and cultural functions, facilitating interaction between people of different cultures. Food is an important element of culture, and the study of its symbolic and communicative functions allows us to better understand the processes of intercultural interaction, identity and social relations. However, despite the considerable amount of research, the issues of gastronomic practices, their symbolic role and impact on intercultural communication remain relevant as globalization continues to change eating habits and cultural interactions in the modern world.

Intercultural communication denotes the transmission of information, ideas, and values among individuals or organisations from diverse cultural origins. It is recognised as a dynamic process encompassing verbal communication, non-verbal cues, social conventions, and shared histories that affect interactions among individuals from distinct cultures. Scholars like Hall (1976) and Hofstede (1980) have significantly influenced the discipline, with Hall's distinctions between high-context and low-context cultures and Hofstede's cultural dimensions providing frameworks for understanding the impact of cultural differences on communication styles.

Intercultural communication theory is based on various approaches, including communication accommodation theory, which investigates how individuals modify their communication to either reduce or highlight cultural differences, and cultivation theory, which analyses how sustained exposure to

different cultures influences individuals' perceptions (Rings, 2022). Moreover, scholars such as Ting-Toomey (2010) underscore the significance of identity and power dynamics in intercultural interactions, contending that intercultural communication encompasses not only the exchange of ideas but also the negotiation of cultural identity and the resolution of conflicts stemming from cultural misunderstandings. These perspectives underscore the intricacy of intercultural communication, encompassing negotiation, adaptability, and the possibility of both connection and misinterpretation during cultural interactions.

There are a number of important studies devoted to various aspects of this issue. For example, Guptill *et al.* (2022) highlighted the paradoxical aspects of gastronomy in society, drawing attention to how food can be both a means of social integration and a source of conflict due to cultural differences. They viewed food as an important element of the social fabric that reflects economic, political and cultural processes. Similarly, Muhammad and Adilbekova (2023) focused on the concept of culinary diplomacy, which plays an important role in strengthening international relations and establishing intercultural dialogue. The authors emphasized that food is a powerful means of soft power, which allows countries to achieve diplomatic success without resorting to hard political influence. Their analysis showed that culinary events, joint gastronomic festivals and official diplomatic dinners can help build trust and understanding between states. Thus, food is becoming not only an element of culture, but also an important tool of international politics that helps build positive relations between countries.

The work of Partarakis *et al.* (2021) focuses on gastronomic heritage as an important element of cultural identity. They investigated how gastronomic traditions can preserve and transmit cultural knowledge, emphasizing the importance of representing these traditions in the modern world through digital technologies. This work is important for understanding how modern means of communication can contribute to the preservation of culinary heritage. Separately, the study by Onalbayeva *et al.* (2022) highlights the ethnocultural features of Kazakh gastronomy, pointing out the importance of food as a symbol of national identity and social interaction. Their study showed how certain dishes can be markers of cultural identity in an intercultural environment. Similarly, Ayan (2023) explored the symbolic meaning of food in postcolonial discourses, emphasizing how food can be used as a tool for brand communication, particularly in the context of postcolonial relations. Her analysis shows how gastronomic traditions can be used to redefine cultural identity.

Ishchenko (2020) studied gastronomy as a marker of identification in an intercultural environment, focusing on the fact that gastronomic practices can serve as important tools for self-identification and social integration. Her research

demonstrated that food is not just a physical need, but also an important symbol of cultural belonging. Visković (2021) analysed gastronomy as a social catalyst in the process of creative placemaking, showing how food can be used to create creative spaces that facilitate cultural exchange. This work has highlighted the importance of gastronomy in shaping local communities and their identities. The study by Anderson and Ingram (2020) focuses on the role of food in transcultural processes, emphasizing its importance in cultural exchanges between Spanish-speaking countries. They investigated how gastronomic traditions help maintain cultural identity and at the same time promote the integration of different communities. Giglio (2024) examined food as a cultural artefact in narratives of migration and resettlement, highlighting how food practices help people preserve cultural heritage and adapt to new conditions. His research showed that food can serve as a bridge between cultural identity and a new environment. Finally, Gibson (2023) analysed the influence of taste and culinary practices among the middle class, highlighting how eating habits become markers of social status and cultural affiliation. This highlighted the importance of food as a symbolic element of social hierarchy and communication.

The works of Douglas (1966) and Mintz (2002) offer valuable theoretical insights into the symbolic and social functions of food. Douglas examined how food is used to establish cultural boundaries, maintain social order, and reflect societal values. Her focus on food as a symbol of purity and pollution aligns with your exploration of how culinary practices serve as markers of cultural identity and social cohesion. Mintz expanded on how food reflects broader socio-economic and cultural systems, highlighting the role of food in identity formation and cultural adaptation. His work on food as a social practice contextualizes your research on the globalization of culinary traditions, showing how food both adapts to and influences intercultural dialogue. These classic studies provide the foundation for understanding how food functions as a cultural tool that not only preserves national traditions but also facilitates global communication and identity negotiation.

However, despite the existing research, there are still gaps in the study of gastronomic practices as a means of intercultural communication. In particular, there is a need for in-depth research on how gastronomic traditions contribute to cultural adaptation in the context of globalization and how food is used as a tool for social integration in different contexts. In addition, there is a need to study the role of media and gastro-tourism in the dissemination of cultural gastronomic knowledge and the development of intercultural relations.

The purpose of this study was to analyse the role of food as a tool for intercultural interaction and to explore how culinary traditions can promote cultural integration in a globalized world. The main objectives of this work were to

determine how sharing food contributes to social connections and intercultural communication; to analyse how globalization affects the spread of gastronomic traditions; to explore possible conflicts and misunderstandings that may arise due to cultural differences in food consumption. It was also important to study how traditional dishes from another culture can help people adapt to a new environment and to assess the role of media, educational programmes and gastro-tourism in spreading gastronomic knowledge and developing intercultural dialogue.

## 2. Materials and methods

The initial stage of the study began with the selection of countries representing different cultural systems and gastronomic traditions. The selection of countries and continents for this study was strategically designed to encompass a broad spectrum of gastronomic practices and their symbolic and communicative functions in intercultural contexts. The countries chosen represent diverse culinary traditions and cultural backgrounds, including East Asia (China, Korea, Japan), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan), Europe (Greece, Italy, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Scandinavia, Ukraine), and the Americas (United States). These regions were selected based on their distinct and influential culinary cultures, which have been shaped by historical, geographical, and cultural factors. The study also explored the hybridities and *mestizajes* within these gastronomic traditions, particularly how global migration, trade, and cultural exchanges have led to the fusion of traditional dishes with local ingredients and methods. This hybridization process not only reflects the adaptation of food to local tastes but also illustrates the evolving nature of food as a symbol of cultural identity and intercultural communication in the globalized world. By analyzing these diverse culinary practices, the study aims to explore the role of food in maintaining national identity while facilitating intercultural dialogue across borders.

The research utilized a combination of high-quality, peer-reviewed databases and specialized bibliographic tools for validation. Key databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and JSTOR were employed for gathering scholarly articles, books, and conference papers related to gastronomic traditions, intercultural communication, and the globalization of culinary practices. This approach ensured access to credible, rigorously validated sources that align with academic standards. The literature search was focused on articles published from 2020 onwards to guarantee the inclusion of the most recent and relevant research in the field.

The search was conducted using a carefully curated set of keywords including "gastronomic traditions," "food culture," "intercultural communication," "food as a symbol," "globalization of culinary practices," "gastrotourism," and "culinary media." To further ensure the accuracy and relevance of the sources, the selected literature underwent a two-tier validation process. First, sources were assessed based on their citation count and influence within the field, reflecting their academic impact and reliability. Second, a closer examination of the methodologies and conceptual frameworks used in the sources was conducted to confirm their alignment with the research objectives, particularly the symbolic and social functions of food within intercultural contexts. Additionally, a range of cultural studies journals and databases dedicated to ethnography and cultural heritage were consulted to complement the gastronomic focus with a more comprehensive cultural lens. Examples of studies included works on the role of food in national identity formation and its symbolic meanings in rituals, such as those by Partarakis *et al.* (2021) on cultural heritage representation and Pavlidis & Markantonatou (2020) on the role of gastrotourism. This methodology, combining both database-driven and content-specific tools, ensured that the research was rooted in authoritative, scholarly sources with a strong empirical foundation.

The last phase of the research entailed a comprehensive examination of national meals as components of cultural heritage that are crucial for the maintenance of national customs. The methodology of historical and sociocultural analysis was utilised to examine how these dishes have been historically associated with national identity and cultural continuity. A meticulous analysis was performed on how each food, in its traditional form, embodies the history, customs, and societal values of its nation of origin. The investigation included a comprehensive examination of the adaptation and reinterpretation of these foods across many cultural contexts, especially as they have gained international prominence. Sources were examined for their depictions of these foods, considering both their historical roots and the development of their symbolic connotations within local and worldwide culinary practices.

A distinct phase of the research focused on examining the influence of globalisation on these culinary traditions. The comparative analysis method was employed to investigate how specific meals, like pizza, sushi, and falafel, have evolved to cater to the taste preferences of Western markets, especially in the United States and Europe. The study examined the evolution of pizza, initially an Italian dish, into several regional forms in the U.S., such as deep-dish pizza, and the adaptation of sushi in California, where it has been combined with local ingredients like avocado. The alterations were examined for their preservation or modification of the original cultural significances of the dishes, while simultaneously becoming essential components of new culinary traditions

in their adapted versions. The study evaluated how these alterations facilitate the worldwide dissemination of these dishes, impacting the evolution of a global culinary culture while concurrently altering the cultural identity of the dishes themselves.

The study used cultural analysis to examine the importance of gastrotourism as a tool for intercultural exchange. The study examined how tourists interact with local gastronomic traditions through participation in festivals, restaurant visits and tastings. Attention was focused on how gastrotourism contributes not only to the promotion of national dishes, but also to a better understanding of cultural characteristics through food. It was analysed how gastro-tourism in countries such as Greece, Italy, Turkey, and Japan contribute to the strengthening of national traditions and cultural dialogue between tourists and locals. To study the conflicts arising from cultural differences in food consumption, an axiological method was used to help identify the values underlying the eating habits of different cultures. This allowed for a deeper understanding of how these values influence cultural norms of behaviour at the table, and what social factors influence the formation of these differences. In addition, cultural and historical analysis was applied to study religious restrictions, such as the ban on pork consumption in Muslim countries, which helped to explore how these restrictions affect intercultural contacts and lead to misunderstandings.

At the stage of researching intercultural communication through food, the method of socio-cultural analysis was used. The study examined how sharing food at festivals, family celebrations or business lunches strengthens social ties and facilitates intercultural communication. The study also looked at the role of media and social media in promoting gastronomic knowledge and cultural traditions. It analysed how cooking shows and blogs influence the dissemination of knowledge about other cultures through food, helping to establish intercultural dialogue.

### 3. Results

Gastics is the science that studies the symbolic, signifying and communicative functions of food and drink in the context of gastroculture. The discipline explores how food and drink serve as a means of social and cultural communication, helping to convey meanings, shape identities and support intercultural dialogue. Its main objective is to study how food and drink act as signs in cultural systems. For example, dishes can be symbols of nationality, social status, or religious beliefs. The semiotics of food plays an important role in this context, where each food item or dish has its own cultural codes. For example, bread in Christianity



has a ritual significance as a symbol of the body of Christ during communion, while tea in Japan is a symbol of harmony and spiritual purity through the tea ceremony. The place of gastics among other disciplines that study culture and society occupy a special niche. It is closely related to anthropology, cultural studies and sociology. It also intersects with ethnography, where researchers study gastronomic traditions in different cultures and their symbolic meanings.

Scientific interest in the symbolic role of food in cultures has developed gradually, starting with early ethnographic and anthropological studies. However, the systematic study of this topic, which is now known as gastics, began to take shape in the mid-twentieth century. One of the most important stages in the development of this science was the recognition of food not only as a source of biological pleasure, but also as an important social and cultural phenomenon. The first references to the cultural significance of food can be found in the works of ancient philosophers and thinkers. For example, in the works of Aristotle and Plato, food was already considered as part of ethical and social norms (Pilcher, 2023). Food was an integral part of rituals and social customs, reflecting status and power in society. However, the first systematic attempts to study the symbolic role of food took place much later, during the anthropological boom of the early 20th century.

Claude Lévi-Strauss and Marcel Moss were French anthropologists who studied the symbolic role of food in their research. C. Lévi-Strauss is the founder of structural anthropology. He analysed how culture and society are structured through symbolic systems, including food. In his book "The Raw and the Cooked" (Lévi-Strauss, 1969) he introduced the concept of the "culinary triangle" (raw, cooked, toasted), which explains how different cooking methods reflect cultural norms and social structures. He believed that culinary processes have a deep symbolic meaning and reflect society's attitudes towards nature, culture, identity and social roles. His works help us understand how food conveys not only taste preferences, but also symbolic meanings that define social relations in culture (Graf & Mescoli, 2020). Marcel Moss, a teacher of C. Lévi-Strauss, is known for his concept of the "gift", which he developed in his book "The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies" (Mauss, 1966). Moss explored how the exchange of things, including food, shapes social connections and interactions. He showed that the gift of food in many cultures is a ritual that strengthens social relationships, establishes status, and emphasizes mutual obligations between participants. His research helps us understand how food is used to create and maintain social structures, and how its consumption has deep symbolic meaning in different societies. Both scholars have laid the foundation for contemporary research on the symbolic and social role of food, which is important in the context of gastics today. Their ideas emphasize that

food is not just a means of survival, but a powerful tool for social communication and cultural expression.

The study of the ritual function of food was an important contribution to the development of gastrics. In many cultures, food plays a central role in religious rituals and celebrations. For example, in Christianity, bread and wine are symbols of the body and blood of Christ during communion, while in Islam certain foods are eaten during the holy month of Ramadan. In such rituals, food becomes a sign of faith and belonging to a religious community. Over time, interest in food as a cultural phenomenon has only grown. In the second half of the twentieth century, researchers began to explore the issues of gastronomic identity and globalization in greater depth. In this context, food is seen as an important element of national identity. For example, dishes such as sushi in Japan, pizza in Italy, borsch in Ukraine or beshbarmak in Kazakhstan have become not only part of national cuisine, but also symbols of national culture and pride. Their consumption, both within their countries and abroad, serves as a way of spreading culture and strengthening national identity. Since the 1980s, gastrics research has become even more interdisciplinary. Sociologists, anthropologists, cultural studies and historians have begun to actively explore the impact of globalization on food culture. They have analysed how the spread of international dishes and food affects cultural identities and social processes. For example, the spread of fast food, such as hamburgers or French fries, has become a symbol of Western culture and the impact of globalization on local culinary traditions (Ristaino & Li, 2022).

Food is a powerful symbol of cultural identity that reflects the history, traditions and social values of each nation. National dishes often have deep cultural roots and are important symbols through which cultural heritage is transmitted (Table 1).

Chinese cuisine is one of the oldest and most influential cuisines in the world, deeply reflecting the country's cultural and philosophical values. Each region of China has its own unique gastronomic characteristics, reflecting not only climatic conditions but also historical development and cultural traditions. One of the most important concepts of Chinese cuisine is the principle of yin and yang balance, which originates from Taoist philosophy. This concept states that foods have "cold" and "hot" properties, and their correct combination is important for maintaining harmony in the body. For example, spicy Sichuan cuisine, which is known for its chilli dishes, is considered "hot", while cucumbers or green tea have "cold" properties and help balance energy. This approach to food emphasizes the close connection between cooking and traditional Chinese medicine, where food is seen as a means of maintaining health (Dunlop, 2023).

**Table 1**

*The most famous national dishes of the world*

Country	The name of the dish	A brief description of the dish	Cultural/social significance
China	Jiaozi	Dumplings made of thin dough, stuffed with meat or vegetables, are boiled or fried.	A symbol of wealth and prosperity, traditionally prepared for the New Year.
Korea	Kimchi	Fermented cabbage with the addition of chili, garlic, and spices.	A symbol of Korean culture and endurance, the main dish on every table, important for health.
Greece	Moussaka	Casserole with layers of aubergine, potatoes, minced meat and béchamel sauce.	Reflecting the influence of the Ottoman Empire, it is an important dish in the Greek national cuisine, often prepared for holidays.
Turkey	Kebab	Pieces of meat fried on fire or grilled, served with vegetables and bread.	A symbol of the nomadic heritage of the Turkic peoples, the main dish in Turkish cuisine is associated with hospitality.
Central Asia	Pilaf	A dish of rice, meat, carrots and spices, prepared in large quantities in a special pan (cauldron).	A symbol of unity and togetherness, it is traditionally prepared for large family or public events.
Italy	Carbonara pasta	Pasta with a special sauce made of eggs, cheese, bacon and black pepper.	A popular dish of Italian cuisine, a symbol of simplicity and sophistication.
France	Brie (cheese)	Soft cheese with white mold, often served with fresh bread and wine.	A part of French gastronomic culture, a symbol of social gatherings, a recognized element of national identity.

Country	The name of the dish	A brief description of the dish	Cultural/social significance
Spain	Paella	A rice dish with saffron, seafood, or meat cooked in a pan.	The symbol of Spanish cuisine, especially popular in Valencia, symbolizes a festive meal and family communication.
Germany	Bratwurst	Traditional German sausage, grilled or fried.	A symbol of German gastronomy, popular at public celebrations such as Oktoberfest.
USA	Barbecue	Meat cooked on an open fire or in a smokehouse with sauces.	A centrepiece of regional cuisines, particularly those of Texas and the Carolinas, it symbolizes the traditions of communal dining and outdoor celebrations.
Italy	Pizza Margherita	Traditional pizza with tomato sauce, mozzarella cheese and basil.	A symbol of Italian culinary culture, reflecting the colours of the national flag of Italy.
Scandinavia (in particular Sweden, Norway, Denmark)	Gravlax	Marinated salmon, usually served with dill and sauce.	An important part of Scandinavian cuisine, a symbol of a long tradition of preserving fish in cold climates.
Ukraine	Borsch	Beetroot, meat, and vegetable soup	A symbol of Ukrainian national cuisine, an important element of cultural heritage, associated with family and holiday meals.

Source: compiled by the authors based on Pilcher (2023), Bozkurt and Arslan (2023), and Yıkmış et al. (2024).

Another key characteristic of Chinese cuisine is the use of fresh ingredients and simple cooking techniques that preserve the natural flavour of food. Dishes such as dumplings (jiaozi) or Peking duck are not only culinary, but also important elements of cultural rituals. Dumplings are traditionally cooked for the Chinese New Year, as their shape resembles ancient gold bars, symbolizing wealth and

prosperity. Peking duck, which is known for its crispy crust, is often associated with imperial cuisine and is a symbol of Chinese hospitality and culinary excellence. Chinese food is also important in shaping national identity through the rituals of eating together. In Chinese culture, a meal is seen as an important social event where family members and friends come together. Meals are served on round tables, which symbolizes unity and equality among all participants. This format of eating together helps to strengthen social ties and emphasizes the collective values that are central to Chinese society. In addition, China's tea culture is an integral part of the national identity. The famous Chinese green tea, in particular Longjing (Dragon's Well Tea), is a symbol of sophistication and harmony with nature. Tea is used not only as a drink, but also in various rituals that reflect deep philosophical traditions and connections with Buddhism and Taoism (Cheng *et al.*, 2024).

Korea has a deep culinary tradition that reflects not only unique national ingredients but also social and religious aspects. One of the key characteristics of Korean cuisine is the emphasis on fermentation. Dishes such as kimchi (fermented vegetables, most commonly cabbage) are not only an everyday staple, but also a symbol of the endurance and resilience of the Korean people. This dish, rich in beneficial bacteria, has also become a hallmark of Korean culture on the international stage due to its popularity and numerous variations. Kimchi is usually served with any meal and is an important part of hospitality rituals and family traditions. Another important dish is bibimbap, which consists of rice, vegetables, meat, and eggs mixed together with chilli paste or soy sauce. This dish symbolizes harmony and unity in diversity, as each ingredient retains its own uniqueness, but together they create a balanced dish. Bibimbap also reflects the aesthetic aspect of Korean cuisine, where colour, texture, and taste are of great importance (Lim & An, 2021). Korean cuisine also has a close connection with seasonality and nature. Many dishes are prepared with seasonal ingredients, such as samgyeongtaek (chicken soup with ginseng), which is traditionally eaten in summer to boost energy. This reflects the Korean philosophy of balance between man and nature, health and tradition.

The cuisine of Central Asia is a unique reflection of its rich history, diverse cultural heritage and geographical location between East and West. Its culinary traditions have been shaped by the nomadic lifestyle that has persisted for centuries, as well as by interaction with various civilizations such as Persian, Chinese, and Turkish. One of the most important dishes in Central Asia is pilaf, which is made from rice, meat, carrots, and spices. Each region has its own variations of pilaf: in Uzbekistan, yellow carrots are added, while in Tajikistan, lamb is often used. Pilaf symbolizes hospitality and generosity. It is traditionally prepared for major holidays or celebrations, such as weddings or religious

festivals, where serving pilaf emphasizes the importance of eating together. The nomadic lifestyle of Central Asian peoples has influenced the development of many unique foods and food preservation methods. Kumys, a fermented milk drink made from mare's milk, is a symbol of health and strength. Kumys is considered the national drink of many peoples in the region, such as the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, and has a deep symbolic meaning linked to their nomadic past. Other dairy products, such as ayran and dried kurut cheese, also play an important role in the nomadic diet and reflect the historical conditions of life in the steppes.

Meat, particularly lamb and horse meat, plays a central role in the Central Asian diet. Many dishes are prepared using techniques that emphasize the tradition of long-term food preservation. For example, beshbarmak, a dish of boiled meat cut into slices and served with noodles, is an important element of the cultural identity of Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. This dish is traditionally prepared for festive occasions or when important guests arrive, which underscores its ritual significance in society. In addition to meat, dough products are of great importance. Dishes such as samsa (meat or vegetable patties) and lagman (noodle soup) highlight the interaction of East and West cuisines and the influence of Chinese culinary tradition on Central Asia. Lagman is another prime example of a dish that combines local identity with regional culinary influences (Alymbaeva, 2020). The social significance of food in Central Asia is also manifested through hospitality rituals. Traditional homes always offer tea with desserts or bread before the main course. Round bread is not only an important part of the meal, but also a symbol of wealth and prosperity. Bread is respected, and its serving is often accompanied by certain rituals.

European cuisine is extremely diverse and reflects the cultural, historical and geographical characteristics of different regions of the continent. It has been shaped by both local resources and interaction between countries, resulting in many unique culinary traditions. One example of an important element is cheese. In France, cheese production has deep cultural and historical roots, and each region of the country is proud of its own varieties of cheese, such as Brie, Camembert, or Roquefort. French cheese is not just a product, but a symbol of traditional culture passed down from generation to generation. Eating cheese is an integral part of a French dinner, which emphasizes the country's gastronomic culture. Another key element of European cuisine is wine, which plays an important role in many countries of the continent. Italy and France are the world's leading wine producers, and for these countries, wine has become a symbol of national identity. For example, Italian Chianti and French Bordeaux are not just drinks, but part of a cultural heritage that reflects regional differences and winemaking traditions that have existed for hundreds of years (Callegari & Perna, 2020).

In the northern part of Europe, particularly in Germany and the Scandinavian countries, traditional cuisine is largely based on meat and root vegetables. German sausages, such as bratwurst, reflect the long history of meat products in the country, where sausages were used as a means of long-term meat preservation. Meanwhile, in Scandinavia, fish dishes such as gravlax (pickled salmon) play a central role in the diet, due to the proximity to the sea and the long winter months when access to fresh produce is limited. Italy is another important example of an influential European culinary culture. Pasta and pizza have become global symbols of Italian cuisine, but each region has its own recipes. For example, pasta carbonara comes from Rome, and pasta bolognese from Bologna. These dishes reflect not only culinary traditions but also historical influences. An important aspect of Italian cuisine is also the use of fresh ingredients, such as tomatoes, basil, olive oil, and cheeses, which form the basis of many national dishes. Western Europe is also known for its bread traditions. The French baguette or Italian ciabatta have become an integral part of the diet. These products are not only popular among locals, but are also important export products that have become symbols of national cultures in the global context.

US cuisine is a reflection of the multicultural influence on the nation, with each region having its own unique dishes and culinary traditions. American cuisine was shaped by different waves of immigrants who brought their culinary customs and traditions, combining them with local products. One of the most important elements of American cuisine is barbecue, which has different variations depending on the region. In Texas, for example, beef barbecue prevails, especially brisket, which is slowly cooked over wood. In contrast, in North Carolina, pork and vinegar sauces are used to give the dish a special flavour. Barbecue not only symbolizes the culinary traditions of the United States, but also has social significance, often becoming the centrepiece of outdoor celebrations and gatherings (Ristaino & Li, 2022). Southern cuisine, known as soul food, is also an important part of American culinary identity. This cuisine originated among African-American communities and includes dishes such as fried chicken, greens with bacon, and sweet potatoes. It symbolizes the resilience and creativity of African Americans, who created these dishes with limited resources during slavery and segregation. Soul food also has great cultural significance, as it reflects the traditions of family gatherings and the importance of community. Thus, American cuisine is not just a set of dishes, but a reflection of a diverse cultural mosaic that has been shaped over the centuries by the interaction of different ethnicities and regional traditions.

Food plays an important role as a means of communication in social situations. Sharing food not only satisfies physiological needs, but also has a social function, strengthening ties between people. The importance of this phenomenon can be

observed in various cultural and social contexts. For example, eating together during the holidays is a common practice around the world, emphasizing the value of time together. Events such as family dinners at Christmas, Easter, or weddings are moments when people not only share food, but also strengthen social ties through conversation and discussion. In these situations, food serves as a symbol of unity and community. National holidays are often accompanied by the preparation of special dishes (Table 2), which not only symbolize traditions but also serve as a means of communication and strengthening social ties.

**Table 2**  
*Special dishes prepared for national holidays in different countries*

Country	Holiday	The name of the dish	A brief description of the dish	Symbolics
USA	Christmas	Turkey	Baked turkey, often served with cranberry sauce and mashed potatoes.	A symbol of generosity and abundance, the central dish of the Christmas dinner.
China	Chinese New Year	Jiaozi	Dumplings with meat or vegetables, boiled or fried.	A symbol of wealth and prosperity, the shape of dumplings resembles gold bars.
Italy	Easter	Casatella	Traditional pie with ricotta cheese, eggs, and meat.	A symbol of rebirth and new life, associated with the Christian beliefs of Easter.
Ukraine	Easter	Paska	Traditional sweet bread decorated with glaze and baked for Easter.	A symbol of resurrection and spiritual renewal, an important element of the holiday basket.
France	Christmas	Bûche de Noël	A traditional Christmas dessert in the shape of a log, made of sponge cake and cream.	A symbol of winter warmth and family traditions, it represents unity and a festive atmosphere.



Country	Holiday	The name of the dish	A brief description of the dish	Symbolics
Germany	Oktoberfest	Pretzel	A large salty dough pretzel, baked until crispy.	A symbol of friendship and hospitality, it is often served with beer during the Oktoberfest festival.
Japan	New year	Mochi	Glutinous rice balls that are traditionally prepared and eaten on New Year's holidays.	A symbol of good luck, health and longevity, an important part of Japanese New Year rituals.
Great Britain	Christmas	Christmas pudding	A sweet dessert made of dried fruits, spices and alcohol, which is prepared for a long time before the holiday.	A symbol of family tradition and prosperity, it is often decorated with a sprig of mistletoe.

Source: compiled by the authors based on Pilcher (2023), Baumert and Fukuda (2021).

In a business context, business lunches play an important role in establishing partnerships and resolving business issues. Lunches or dinners during negotiations can create an informal atmosphere where food becomes a tool for building trust and partnerships. This highlights how food can facilitate more open and informal communication even in formal situations.

Gastronomy is essential in defining and articulating cultural identity, as cuisine is inherently connected to the history, customs, and values of a community. The connection between gastronomy and identity is fundamentally anchored in the notion that food fulfils not only physiological requirements but also acts as a significant emblem of cultural affiliation and social unity. Academics like Douglas (1966) have highlighted that food transcends mere commodification, serving as a “cultural artefact” that mirrors the social and symbolic frameworks of a society. Traditional cuisines frequently serve as symbols of national pride, exemplified by classic foods such as Italy's pizza and Japan's sushi, which encapsulate the cultural narratives of their respective nations. These foods are essential to the formation of national identity and are frequently employed to reinforce cultural uniqueness amidst globalisation.

Furthermore, food significantly contributes to international interaction by serving as a conduit for cultural interchange and comprehension. As food crosses boundaries, it evolves and adapts, leading to the emergence of hybrid cuisines and novel culinary traditions. The process termed “gastrocultural

hybridisation" enables the amalgamation of culinary habits, therefore fostering communication among many civilisations. Food serves as a medium of international communication, facilitating the bridging of differences through a shared experience that transcends linguistic and cultural barriers. Edward Said's notion of "cultural translation" is applicable in this context, wherein food serves as a conduit for comprehension and reciprocal respect, facilitating the connection and engagement of disparate groups with one another's customs and practices. Food facilitates a discussion among individuals and communities that enriches social relationships and fosters a profound comprehension of cultural identity complexity and globalisation dynamics.

Intercultural communication through food is an important element of social interaction that promotes better understanding between different cultures. Gastronomic traditions can facilitate interaction by allowing people from different countries to get to know each other's cultural backgrounds through the joint preparation or consumption of food. One example is international food festivals, where representatives of different cultures showcase their culinary traditions. For example, at the Taste of Chicago festival, culinary experts from all over the world present national dishes, which allows visitors to taste food from different countries, thus learning about the specifics of culinary techniques and gastronomic preferences. This creates an open space for dialogue between cultures and reduces barriers that may arise due to differences in lifestyles. At the same time, food can make intercultural communication difficult due to cultural or religious prohibitions on certain foods. For example, many cultures have religious prohibitions on eating certain types of meat (pork or beef), which can create misunderstandings or awkward situations during intercultural meals. The spread of gastronomic traditions in the globalized world has become an important part of intercultural communication. Globalization has facilitated the active exchange of culinary practices between countries, leading to the internationalization of many national dishes. Food that was once available only in certain regions is now easily accessible anywhere in the world thanks to international trade, migration and cultural exchange.

Globalisation has profoundly transformed local gastronomy, resulting in the amalgamation of culinary traditions from several civilisations. This amalgamation of cuisines, commonly known as gastronomic hybridisation, transpires when traditional recipes from one culture are integrated into another, where they are modified to suit local palates, ingredients, and culinary methods. Italian pizza has undergone global transformation, exemplified by varieties such as deep-dish pizza in the United States and distinctive toppings in Japan, which mirror local flavour preferences and culinary practices. Sushi, initially a

traditional Japanese cuisine, has transformed in Western nations, frequently incorporating ingredients such as avocado or cream cheese, diverging from its authentic preparation. These changes enhance the accessibility of foods for diverse groups while also infusing them with new significances that resonate with local culinary contexts.

The amalgamation of culinary methods frequently results in the emergence of “fusion cuisines,” a direct consequence of intercultural interchange enabled by globalisation. These fusion foods, while preserving aspects of their original shapes, gain new symbolic significances and societal roles. Globalization’s impact on local gastronomy also permeates the commercial sector, as foreign food chains and fast-food behemoths such as McDonald’s and Starbucks have modified their menus to align with local tastes. In India, McDonald’s provides a variety of vegetarian selections to accommodate dietary constraints, whilst in Mexico, the chain integrates native delicacies such as jalapeños and salsa into its offerings. These alterations not only signify the increasing demand for culturally specific flavours but also underscore how food serves as a medium for cultural adaptation and transformation. Globalisation not only promotes the dissemination of culinary practices but also cultivates the development of new food cultures, enhancing global gastronomy while concurrently transforming local identities.

Pizza is one of the most prominent examples of the internationalization of food. Although pizza has Italian origins, it has become a world-famous dish that has been adapted to the taste preferences of different cultures. In the United States, for example, pizza is often made with a thicker crust and more ingredients, which differs from the classic Italian version. Pizza has become a part of fast food and one of the symbols of globalized cooking. Another example is sushi, which originated in Japan but has become popular in many countries in recent decades. Sushi bars can be found all over the world, and the dish has adapted to local tastes. For example, in the United States, a popular “California roll” was created, which differs from traditional Japanese sushi (Heng, 2023). This shows how globalization contributes not only to the spread of national dishes, but also to their transformation. Falafel, a traditional dish in the Middle East, has also become popular in many countries. Due to the growing interest in vegetarian and vegan dishes, falafel has gained popularity in Europe and the US as a healthy fast-food option. This adaptation to local demands shows how gastronomic traditions are transformed by globalization.

Globalization, which promotes the spread of gastronomic traditions, can also cause cultural conflicts and misunderstandings due to differences in food consumption and table behaviour. Different cultures have different meanings for food and food-related rituals, which can lead to awkward situations during

intercultural interactions. One of the most common examples is the difference in dining etiquette between European and Asian cultures. In Europe, it is customary to eat with a fork and knife, while in many Asian countries, chopsticks are used. While in Asian culture, leaving chopsticks upright in a bowl of rice can be seen as a bad sign (due to the association with funeral rituals), in European countries this is not the case, and a person may not realize that such a gesture evokes negative emotions. Also, in some cultures, such as Japan, it is considered bad manners to pass food from chopsticks to another person's chopsticks, as it is associated with funeral rituals.

In European cultures, making noise while eating, such as loud slurping, can be perceived as disrespectful to others. In contrast, in countries such as China or Japan, the sound of slurping while eating soups or noodles can be seen as a sign that the dish is enjoyable. This contrast in table behaviour can be confusing or even irritating for guests from different cultures. Another example is religious food prohibitions that can cause conflict. In Muslim countries, pork is forbidden, and serving it can cause serious misunderstandings. A similar situation can arise with alcohol, which is an integral part of many European dinners but is prohibited in some religions and cultures. Cultural adaptation through gastronomy is an important element of integration into a new environment. Consuming traditional dishes from another culture not only opens up new gastronomic tastes, but also helps to understand cultural values, rituals and social norms. Through food, a person can feel part of a community, getting closer to local customs and practices. For example, migrants adapting to a new country often get acquainted with local dishes as part of the socialization process. Sharing meals together or visiting national restaurants can help bring them closer to the local population. This not only helps to overcome cultural barriers, but also eases the process of integration into a new environment. In addition, preparing dishes from one's native culture in a new environment allows one to maintain a connection with one's own cultural identity while learning and adopting new gastronomic traditions. This two-way adaptation through food becomes an important element of multicultural dialogue.

The media play an important role in sharing gastronomic traditions between cultures. Cooking shows, blogs and social media create global platforms for the exchange of cultural knowledge about food. Shows such as *MasterChef* or *Chef's Table* not only demonstrate cooking techniques, but also tell stories about the origins of dishes and their cultural significance. Thanks to social media, gastronomic knowledge is spreading faster, and culinary traditions are becoming accessible to a wider audience. Bloggers and culinary influencers on platforms such as Instagram or YouTube show how to prepare dishes from other cultures, thereby facilitating the integration of different gastronomic practices into the everyday diets of different countries.

Gastrotourism has become an important element of modern, globalized culture. People travel to other countries not only for tourist experiences, but also to experience local cuisine. Visiting restaurants, street markets and gastronomic festivals allows immersing oneself in the culture of the region through taste sensations. For example, many tourists travel to Italy to try authentic pasta and pizza, to Japan for authentic sushi, and to Thailand for aromatic spicy cuisine. This cultural exchange through gastronomy allows us to better understand the history, religious traditions and social habits of a country. Gastro-tourism also contributes to the development of local economies by stimulating the development of the restaurant business and preserving culinary heritage.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings showed that gastronomic traditions are a powerful means of intercultural communication, as food not only helps to satisfy physiological needs, but also conveys social and cultural meanings, shaping national identity and facilitating intercultural relations. This study has shown that gastronomy can be both a source of unity and a cause of conflict between cultures, depending on how its elements are perceived and interpreted. The importance of the study lies in the fact that it reveals the social and symbolic role of food in different cultures and shows how gastronomic traditions influence global intercultural understanding.

The study confirmed that food is an important symbol of national identity, which is consistent with the findings of Otunchieva *et al.* (2021) who emphasized the transformation of food as a carrier of national identity in Kyrgyzstan, especially in the context of nomadic peoples. Otunchieva *et al.* also noted that food retains its significance as a symbol of national identity even when it is being changed by other cultures. These results are consistent with the findings of the present study, which showed that dishes such as borsch or pilaf retain symbolic meaning for their peoples and remain important markers of national identity. However, in other countries, such as Singapore, national dishes are mixed under the influence of the multicultural context, as described by Reddy and van Dam (2020). In contrast to the stability of national dishes in Kyrgyzstan, in Singapore, dishes are constantly transforming, creating a new multicultural identity.

Another important aspect of the study is to identify how each dish or product carries a deep symbolic meaning that reflects cultural characteristics. This allows us to consider food as a symbolic code that conveys certain social and cultural meanings. Shibiko (2021) draws attention to the difficulties of translating

some culinary terms between different languages, which can lead to a loss of the original meaning and create misunderstandings between cultures. This confirms the study's conclusions that food has its own cultural meaning, which can be distorted or lost when the context or language environment changes. At the same time, Soyombo *et al.* (2024) note that the symbolic meaning of food varies not only between cultures, but also within different social groups, depending on their traditions, identity and social context. This suggests that the meaning of food is dynamic and can adapt to new conditions, while maintaining or modifying its content. Thus, food acts as a flexible cultural element that reflects changes in society.

The globalization of gastronomic traditions has become another important aspect of this study. It was found that national dishes such as pizza, sushi, and falafel have become international products, adapting to the taste preferences of different cultures. This is consistent with the study by Jeong and Oh (2021), who investigated how Korean cuisine integrates into the global market by adapting traditional dishes to new cultural contexts. At the same time, Pavlidis and Markantonatou (2020) pointed out that Greek gastronomic traditions have also become part of global culture through gastrotourism, which confirms the findings of this study on the importance of gastronomy in intercultural dialogue. However, some authors, such as Tortolini (2021), have warned that globalization can lead to commercialization and loss of the original meaning of traditional dishes, which was not explored in this study. Conflicts over cultural differences in food consumption also emerged as an important aspect of this study. It was found that cultural differences can become a source of misunderstanding or even conflict, especially if the gastronomic norms of one culture conflict with other traditions. This is in line with the findings of Tortolini, who pointed out that the media can contribute to the formation of stereotypes about other cultures through food, which in turn can cause misunderstandings between cultures. In this context, the study confirmed that misunderstandings of gastronomic traditions, such as eating habits or religious restrictions, can create barriers to intercultural communication. However, this study focuses on the social and religious aspects of food in more detail, making it an important addition to the existing work on this topic.

The dissemination of gastronomic traditions through the media was an important aspect of the study, highlighting the impact of cooking shows, social media and blogs on the formation of culinary knowledge and awareness of different cultures. Media today is a powerful tool that not only demonstrates how to cook, but also helps to preserve and disseminate cultural heritage. Jeong and Oh (2021) noted that thanks to the media, Korean cuisine has gained worldwide recognition, allowing it to integrate into the global market and become part

of the international gastronomic scene. This confirms the conclusions of this study that culinary media can not only popularize gastronomic traditions, but also adapt them to new audiences, contributing to their commercial success. However, Tortolini (2021) draws attention to the risks associated with such dissemination. He notes that cooking shows can simplify traditional recipes or even distort their symbolic meaning, which can lead to a loss of authenticity of cultural heritage. This poses a certain threat to the preservation of gastronomic traditions in their original form, as the commercialization of cooking may cause the true meaning of dishes to disappear, giving way to their superficial perception as a commodity.

Gastro-tourism as a means of cultural exchange has shown its importance in the development of intercultural understanding. Visiting gastronomic festivals, local markets, restaurants and tasting local dishes allows tourists to better understand the culture of a country through food. As noted by Pavlidis and Markantonatou (2020), gastrotourism is becoming an important means of promoting national cuisines, contributing to increased interest in the traditions, history and social aspects of the region. Food here acts as a "cultural bridge" through which people can learn to better understand and respect cultural differences. Soyombo *et al.* (2024) added that in Africa, gastrotourism contributes not only to the promotion of local cuisine, but also to deepening knowledge about the socio-cultural characteristics of the regions. Gastronomic traditions play an important role in the formation of cultural identity and provide an opportunity for tourists not only to learn new dishes, but also to integrate into other cultural environments. This confirms the findings of this study, which show that gastrotourism not only enriches knowledge about other cultures, but also facilitates the process of cultural adaptation by helping to overcome barriers between different peoples and traditions through shared food.

This study highlights the importance of food as a means of intercultural communication and points to various aspects of gastronomic practices that can both promote understanding between cultures and cause conflict. This study is in line with many other works, especially those that explore the socio-cultural role of food, such as Otunchieva *et al.* (2021), Reddy and van Dam (2020), Jeong and Oh (2021). However, it also points to the need for further research into the impact of globalization on gastronomic traditions and the potential negative effects of media commercialization of food. The study found that gastronomic traditions play an important role in intercultural communication and identity maintenance. These findings are in line with other studies that also emphasize the importance of food in forming social and cultural ties in multicultural societies. The analysis of national dishes showed that even in the context of globalization, food retains

its symbolic role as a marker of national identity. The study also confirmed that the spread of gastronomic traditions through the media contributes to their popularization, but at the same time carries the risk of losing authenticity when adapted to other cultural contexts.

## 5. Conclusions

The results confirmed that gastronomic traditions can not only preserve historical and cultural values, but also establish intercultural dialogue. The symbolism of food was identified as one of the main functions in gastroculture. The study showed that specific dishes or products can act as symbols of religious or national meanings. For example, bread in Christian rituals or tea in Japanese culture carry deep symbolic meaning that conveys certain cultural codes. This highlighted the importance of studying food not only as a physiological need, but also as an element that shapes social and cultural identity.

The analysis also confirmed that food is an important symbol of national identity. The study of national dishes such as sushi, pizza, or borsch showed that they are elements of cultural heritage that contribute to the preservation of national traditions and pride. Importantly, because these dishes are spread around the world, national cultures retain their significance even in a globalized context. One of the important aspects of the study was to examine the impact of globalization on the spread of gastronomic traditions. The results of the study showed that globalization is contributing to the expansion of national dishes far beyond their countries of origin, allowing them to integrate into other cultural environments. An example is dishes such as pizza and sushi, which have become popular in many countries around the world, adapting to local taste preferences. However, this can also lead to a certain commercialization and loss of authenticity.

The study confirmed that conflicts due to cultural differences in food consumption can arise due to different traditions and etiquette. For example, different standards of table behaviour in Europe and Asia can cause misunderstandings. Religious or social restrictions can also be a source of conflict when sharing food. This highlights the importance of knowledge of cultural norms and traditions in intercultural communication. Special attention was paid to the role of gastronomy in intercultural communication. Sharing food during festivals or social events helps to strengthen intercultural ties and facilitates cultural exchange. The study also showed that the media, including cooking shows, blogs and social networks, play an important role in spreading gastronomic traditions, which contributes to the commercialization of national dishes and their adaptation to new cultural contexts.



Thus, the study results confirmed the importance of food as a symbolic element that facilitates cultural exchange, preserves national identity and fosters intercultural dialogue. They also showed that globalization and commercialization can have both positive and negative consequences for the preservation of the cultural authenticity of gastronomic traditions.

One of the limitations of the study is its focus on specific aspects of gastronomic culture, without considering the broader context of other social and economic factors that may also influence intercultural communication through food. Further research could focus on the relationship between gastronomic traditions and other social and economic factors, such as tourism, migration, and the impact of modern technology on the formation of gastronomic preferences in different cultures.

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