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## **EVALUATION OF CHEFS' DESIGN PROCESSES AND PRESENTATION CRITERIA**

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### **Abstract**

Gastronomy and culinary arts have become an area of prominence with food design, presentation and aesthetics as well as food preparation and taste. In the study, it was aimed to show how the chefs create their original ideas under artist and chef identities and how they evaluate the food presentations. The study was based on qualitative research methods and conducted face-to-face interviews with expert chefs in the field of gastronomy. In this context, semi-structured interview form was used in interviews with eight chefs. In the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews, a descriptive analysis method was used. In the result of the study, it has been revealed that the chefs were inspired by a certain understanding of art, tried to form their own style, inspired from the previously seen or done dishes, gothic and illusion styles, Turkish cuisine, nature, technology, artworks. In addition to this, the criteria used by the chefs in evaluating the presentations in competitions were flavor, hygiene, compliance with the category or concept, originality, consistency, material selection, use of techniques, use of sauce and color harmony. In conclusion, it has been revealed that most of the chefs used many visual design elements and principles.

Key words: Gastronomy, culinary arts, design process, presentation criteria, chefs.

### **Introduction**

The word “gastronomy” was formed by merging the Greek words “gaster” (stomach) and “nomas” (law). And also gastronomy is defined as the art or science of good eating.

“Culinary art” is a discipline that encompasses knowledge of food science, food preparation, nutrition, cooking techniques, aesthetics, and cultures (Jeou-Shyan and Lee, 2007). Culinary artists should have professional knowledge and skills as well as cultural and artistic training. However, creativity is really the key ingredient in culinary art, and the most essential one in the project of upgrading the culinary profession (Jeou-Shyan ve Lee, 2007: 5-6). Studies have shown that visual factors such as color and balance in a plate can affect the perception and response of the person eating (Michel, Velasco, Gatti and Spence, 2014).

Preparing food, cooking and presenting the delicacies of the food, but the aesthetic values that affect the visual effects are actions. Academicians have begun to explore the meaning of this relationship by using many approaches from anthropology to sociology to even visual art techniques (Piatti, 2014). The relationship between food, art and design has gained importance with the realization of the aesthetic and visual aspect in the food and the increase of the effort to express the beauty. When looking at the food presentation from the frame of art, the plate serves as a canvas and the food becomes an integral whole with its flavor and presentation (Deroy et al., 2014). Escoffier emphasized that cookery is an art and that it will continue to be so that the kitchen can be divided into chapters and that fundamental changes in the kitchen can be realized (Durand, Rao and Monin, 2007).

Chefs have a major role in making the kitchen associated with art and design. The chefs, who were trained by their mentors in the past, focused on the skills and techniques lacking modern management and innovation (Jeou-Shyan and Lee, 2007). For this reason, many of the chefs worked in small and medium-sized enterprises at that time, and there were few chefs with a global perspective. However, in recent years, the establishment of high-level institutes for cooking education has brought forward attitudes and a global perspective, and as a result, chefs in culinary arts have become increasingly more creative professionals (Jeou-Shyan and Lee, 2007). Preparing food, cooking and presenting the delicacies of the food, but the aesthetic values that affect the visual effects are actions. For this reason, culinary artists should have cultural and artistic education in addition to their professional knowledge and skills. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are some studies examining the relationship between food and art (Quinet, 1981; Gazzoli, 1995; Telfer, 1996; Wood, 2000; Kuehn, 2005; Strycker, 2013; Piatti, 2014). Due to the fact that cooking is considered only as a skill-focused discipline, it is seen that there are a limited number of studies on the food design process. In this study focused the food design and presentation criteria of the chefs. The study is important in terms of revealing the design process of the conductors and the points they take into consideration when evaluating a presentation.

### **Methodology**

The main purpose of this study is to determine chefs' creative desing process and presentation criteria with the help of chefs' view. The study was based on qualitative research methods and conducted face-to-face interviews with expert chefs in the field of gastronomy. In this context, semi-structured interview form was used in interviews with eight chefs. In the interview form, chefs' opinions have been received on "process of food design" and "presentation criteria" in order to. The interviews were then deciphered and different codes were assigned to each participant.

Qualitative research data collection techniques were utilized. In-depth interviews were conducted with seven chefs through the semi-structured questionnaire. The interviews lasted for half an hour. Data were analyzed by content analysis. The main process in content analysis is to bring the similar data together within some certain concepts and themes and to organise and interpret them so that readers can understand them (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2003). In order to ensure the reliability of the research, researcher diversity, expert review and direct quotations from the text were used. In the quotations, respondents were labeled as C1, C2, C3...C7 to ensure their anonymity.

### **Findings**

#### **1. Demographics data of the chefs**

Demographic data of the chefs are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Demographics of the chefs**

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7
<b>Gender</b>	F	M	M	F	M	M	F
<b>Age</b>	33	33	37	36	46	37	50
<b>Home city</b>	İstanbul	İstanbul	Kuşadası	İstanbul	İstanbul	İstanbul	İstanbul
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	Married	Married	Single	Married	Single	Married
<b>Education</b>	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Master degree	Undergraduate	Undergraduate
<b>Area</b>	Sugar paste artist, Instructor chef	Instructor chef	Instructor chef	Sugar paste artist, Instructor chef	Instructor chef	Instructor chef	Sugar paste artist, Instructor chef

A total of seven chefs were interviewed. While six of the participants live in Istanbul, a chef lives in Kuşadası. It is seen that four of the chefs participating in the survey are women and three of them are men. While three of the participants are single, four are married. It is seen that sixteen participants are at the undergraduate level and one participant is at the master level. Many of the participants stated that they completed more than one undergraduate degree in order to improve themselves in different fields at the undergraduate level. In addition, all of the attendants stated that they serve as teachers as well as serve in the professional sense. Participants' ages ranged from 33 to 50 years.

All the chefs participating in the research represented our country in international competitions and won many awards. Findings emerging from the opinions of the chefs on the design process, aesthetics and presentation criteria were interpreted by making direct quotations from the participants' opinions under the relevant theme headings. The questions used in the study were taken as a theme. These themes are; design process and chef's criteria for presentation.

## **2. Design process of the chefs**

When they were asked about the elements they were influenced by the design during the design phase, C1 answered:

*"...I am very impressed by the Gothic style, from illusion and humor". For example, there may be rebellion. The things that stick to the general perceptions of society. I actually want people to see my*

*character when they look at my business. But of course you can't do this to any order from the customer, but you can do it in the cooking competition."*

C2 stated the elements that were influenced in designing their designs as follows:

*"The thing that feeds me the most is the dishes I've seen before and the plates I've made before."*

C3 affected by nature in the design process has stated:

*"Everything in the nature. There's no other explanation for that. Don't we all do that? It's like a tree branch. We're pouring the sauce with the back of the spoon. We are inspired by nature, we are not doing anything else. All of our age cakes are round now we've just started to do it in other ways. We take our designs from nature."*

On the other hand C4 indicates that she works more gothic and follows art in her works:

*My head is working a little differently. I grew up in a family of artists and I was always intertwined with art. That was an advantage for me. My work is a little wild and gothic. My outward appearance certainly does not reflect this. Those who see my work are surprised and ask where do you find them? I'm telling, I've expressed these feelings inside of me that I have nothing about it. I usually deal with fantastic things, computer games, flying people, things with special powers, stories, fairy tales or something. We need to follow the world in our business, not just chefs or people in our industry. I, for example, follow the sculptors, follow the painters, I'm inspired by them. One needs to know himself, what he likes, and what he can do."*

C5 emphasizes the need to read and investigate a lot while shaping the design process:

*"I read a lot, I can say that. I mean, I'm getting too many books. Both in terms of design and to make a prescription. Because what you've done is going on in a very short time. After transferring the information to the students, they assimilate it very quickly. you do the same thing every year, you leave yourself on the same level and you can not give the student something new. In order to overcome this I read a lot of research. I had the opportunity to study molecular gastronomy at the master's level. Maybe there are a story 15 years for European, but it's new to Turkey. There is a high demand for it now."*

Finally, in the design of C6, he expressed what fed him:

*"Life, technology, environment, success, success stories. Many things are life itself."*

C7 explained with the following statements that we should strengthen the visual memory by emphasizing the importance of nature:

*"Once visual memory is very important. For example, I'm working on the flower. I take a picture of flowers. I think how I can paint. I'm taking flowers home, I'm looking at how many sheets there are and examining their colors. I take a lot of photos. I've got a live flower sample. There are hundreds of thousands of examples on the Internet, good or bad. Even from the worst, you can get something to inspire. So you have to watch and follow a lot. Visual memory needs to be strengthened. I think the artist's biggest thing is its visual memory. Need to develop absolutely."*

### **3. Presentation evaluation criteria of chefs**

When evaluating a presentation in a food / pastry contest, the students were asked about the criteria they were considering and their answers are given below:

C1 is based on certain rules:

*“We are bound to them by the rules given by the International Chefs Association in the Competitions. There were more categories in live competitions and 4 of them were in visual arts. Cleaning of workmanship, hygiene, category compatibility, application, authenticity. In the category of flavor, there is more to enter. Likewise, compliance with the category, preparation, hygiene in the interior, preparation of the materials used, presentation, everything enters into the work. It's more because we're also taste it. And in the live competition, you have to taste it right away. Whether they fit the menu, preparing the menu, whether it's already prepared or not, because they're very important.”*

C2 uses the following statements when specifying the criteria he considers when evaluating a presentation:

*“Consistency first of all. Tissue consistency and balance, flavor consistency and balance, texture consistency and balance. What do I mean? If you don't want to force the borders on a plate, you don't make a main meal plate that you create from all the crunch things. There must be an element of crustiness there. Isn't it very empty on a plate that you create entirely from sauces? Interesting, it seems like you're eating paint, but it doesn't create the satisfaction of eating. So what is it that we want to reach? In which context is the goal desired? So what is the concept? Is it a starter plate, a main dinner plate or a dessert plate?”*

C3 states that the evaluation criteria are addressed in two different ways:

*“First of all, we have the criteria to pay attention when cooking the food. We look at cleaning, selection of materials and how it works. In the presentation, we look at the originality, the techniques used, the taste and the appearance. We look at everything.”*

C4 says he considers different criteria as pastry and cooking competitions:

*“At least three techniques must be used. It's not gonna be fingerprints, it's gonna be clean. In a day, it will not have given him time. After that, he needs to know the color harmony, he needs to know the anatomy very well. If he's going to make a human figure or an animal figure, he should definitely know the anatomy. These are all things we know. It also has to be based on a theme. It must be an original idea, so it must be based on an original foundation, not a imitation of something. These should be paid attention in the presentations. When tasting, the taste, the heat of the dish and the cooking properties are very important. Is the preliminary preparation sufficient? Have you been paid attention to hygiene and sanitation? These are all very important criteria in cooking competitions.”*

C5 states that he has paid attention to the degree of cooking, the suitability of the material used and color harmony:

*"The presentation, of course, is related to food. For example, be care not to cut the béchamel sauce. If something is macaroni, I care that the pasta is cooked in al dente setting. In other words, it is a situation that changes according to which food is made. If the soup was made I would pay attention to the density of the soup or I would look at the density of the amount of sauce or the amount of flavor in it. I've been looking at her if she's used broth or chicken broth. There is a lot of difference between making soup with normal water and making it with meat or chicken. It takes you three hours to make one, and another half an hour. I mean, I'm looking if he makes a great effort or not. I'll check the color harmony. For instance by dividing the plate into four, did the person who present pay attention to the color harmony? Did he take care of the cut? Is cooking tecnic done right? These are the features that usually arise. You look at them, but color matching is very important. In other words, did he used colors that match each other, or colors that contrast to each other? Color harmony is very important."*

C6 says he cares about new ideas:

*"I think the originality that one wants to reveal is more important than anything else. So for the moment it may not hold very good flavor. But if he puts a unique idea there, he will do it someday. If he couldn't do that day, then he'll do it one day. The original way of thinking is very important to me. So maybe a good taste may not be at that moment. But the idea is very important. The exit point is very important because it will determine your branding and those ideas that are not ordinary or ordinary in the future."*

C7 states that there are criteria such as technique, color, taste, hygiene, proposition, etc.:

*"It is very important for me to use the right technique when doing a job. Because our job is a little technical. If you do the job according to the technique is more smooth work. Then the color harmony is important to me. 50% of the visuality in my opinion to play with color. If you do not use the colors properly, even if the technique is correct, the work never shows itself. If you think artfully, color transitions and light are important. Also the flavor is very important. For example, we received Wax's jury training. If you are a cooking competition, you need to look at the techniques and hygiene of the chefs. Chefs have beard and mustache lately. I think there shouldn't be. In addition to this, it is very important whether the food is brought to the place in the appropriate cold chain. In pastry competitions, we do it visually, but there are a lot of criteria in the edible part of its very detail, of course we have to look at the details. Now the first is that when you bring it from the kitchen to the presentation table, the holding area should not be full. We're putting more minimized things in it, not fusion cuisine. You will leave the area where the finger is blank, once it is one of these rules. Proportion is important. When you look at the plate is important in the proporsion. How much of the plate has been empty, how much has filled out and has he made original design? Taste is important."*

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to investigate the factors that the chefs were affected during the design stages and the criteria they used to evaluate the presentations. In designing the chefs' own business and food presentations; they were inspired by a certain understanding of art, tried to form their own style, inspired from the previously seen or done dishes, gothic and illusion styles and quoted from Turkish cuisine, nature and artworks. In addition, the chefs emphasized that it is very important to develop the visual memory by examining everything in the nature and the environment. Chefs stated that they followed the works of art, studied and researched a lot, and they created their designs by

being influenced by technology and life. Parallel to the results of this study Ottenbacher and Harrington (2007) pointed out that the sources of inspiration of the Michelin-starred chefs were: visiting a colleague's restaurant, reading cooking literature, new cooking technology, visiting food markets, cooking shows, traveling abroad, experiences from previous employers and ideas from customers.

The criteria used by the chefs in evaluating the presentations in competitions; flavor, hygiene, compliance with the category, originality, consistency (texture consistency and balance, flavor consistency and balance, visual consistency and balance), material selection, theme selection, technical use, sauce use, degree of cooking, use of space and color harmony has been seen. Consequently, it was seen that most of the chefs used many design elements such as composition, color, texture, visual integrity, line, shape, shape and form used in the design process. Also Dahl (2009) emphasized the importance of visual presentation "The taste sense is evoked by the five flavours (sweet, salt, sour, bitter and umami) and finally the visual is stimulated through presentation and composition of colour and aesthetics". When we look at the literature on design process, it is seen that principles such as direction, space, balance, proportion, hierarchy, emphasis, continuity and integrity are mentioned. However it was seen that the chefs only addressed the principles of space and balance.

As a result of this study, by contributing to the literature related to the field, it has contributed to increase the awareness of the chefs in the design process. In addition, it is thought that the study will shed light on the preparation process for the design and cooking competitions of the future chefs. The only limitation of the study is that the chefs interviewed within the scope of the study are only sugar paste artist and instructor chef. In the further studies, a larger sample can be provided by including vegetable carving, ice sculpture, hotel kitchen and independent restaurant chefs.

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