

The E-economy and the Culinary Heritage

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This paper shows how the rhetoric of food can be used as a tool in the construction of European identities. Meals, shopping, cooking, manufacture and marketing are used as a mean to achieve the goal of a distinctive European character – particularly through the encouragement of culinary diversity. By talking of identities in the plural, I want to demonstrate that, parallel to the intention of strengthening a pan-European community, food can be used to highlight many contrastive identities. The labelling of food with texts and pictures offers a symbolic field that is redolent with meaning, where questions of distinction and categorization, belonging and anchorage in a changeable world are both raised and answered.

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“This year’s great fad for offal and extremities of various kinds is a sign of how well Swedish restaurant culture has been integrated in the European food community [...] At present no single national cuisine – whether from Europe or from other parts of the world – is celebrating any great triumphs on the plate. After having travelled round the Mediterranean and made some stops in the Middle East and North Africa, more and more food creators are now back in France” (*Gourmet* 1/99).

“Euro-fusion” or Euro-cooking is the very latest fashion that the trend spotters of the food magazine *Gourmet* can distinguish in the diversity of restaurants in Sweden. Safe cards like duck liver and sweetbread have to give way to fried ox cheek and *brandade* (a purée of dried cod). A robust and somewhat rural food tradition refined with the classical French culinary art, truffled with the rebellious 1990s fondness for crossovers and bold combinations of taste. The editors interpret this renewed contact with the hegemonic French cuisine as a sign of the strong gastronomic self-confidence thriving in other European countries. It is certainly not by chance that the prefix *Euro-* is

put to use. It has been launched – above all by the EU – as a synonym of culture and breeding, authenticity and quality, history and tradition. An express goal of today’s EU policy is “to increase the sense of belonging to the same community” and to enhance “the cultural area common to Europeans”¹ (cf. Shore 1999, 2000). One way to realize this vision of European strength and integration has proved to go via the mouth and the food that we in today’s society eat and also increasingly talk about.

My intention is to shed light on two different but interacting cultural processes. Firstly I want to show how, above all, the rhetoric of food can be used as a tool in the construction of European identities. Food and meals, shopping and cooking, manufacture and marketing can have both an inclusive and an exclusive effect, depending on the discursive context in which they occur. Food is used as a means to achieve the goal of a distinctive European character – particularly through the encouragement of culinary diversity. By talking of identities in the plural, I want to demonstrate that, parallel to the intention of strengthening a pan-European community, food can be used to highlight many contrastive identities. As examples of this I describe the

ambition of the Swedish food market to be perceived as concerned with consumers, production, and animal ethics.

Secondly, I want to show how Europe and “the European” are terms frequently used to sell more food on the increasingly important food market. During the 1990s a whiff of Europe functioned almost as a trade mark which guaranteed the consumer *added cultural value*, a lease on a certain lifestyle associated with certain ideals (cf. Östberg 1999). This “Europeanization” is obvious in the marketing, packaging, and labelling of foodstuffs. To be able to launch a new product as an outstanding choice, it literally has to stand out so that it can be selected in preference to other items. The consumer wants to be able to associate the commodity with a specific origin, documented manufacture, and declared contents.

I want to use the possibilities of interpretation offered by the labelling of food. What can we read about global flows and local networks, about European policies, about the nation-state and transnational regions, about social differentiation and social identification, and about the distribution of responsibility between state and individual? The labelling of food with texts and pictures offers a symbolic field that is redolent with meaning, where questions of distinction and categorization, belonging and anchorage in a changeable world are both raised and answered.

The Guises in Which Food Appears

There is an obvious link between food, mouth, and speech. It is with the aid of the mouth that we consume food. The mouth also functions as a border guard by verbally formulating what is edible and inedible. In this respect cultural representations are as decisive as physical perceptions of what is considered palatable (Fischler 1988; Falk 1994; Kayser Nielsen 1997:8). Declarations of contents, symbols, hints, and recipes, along with pictures of the commodity, shape a cultural pre-understanding of what we may put in our mouths. Different genres for the description of food, its fashion-bound narrativity and poetics, indicate the changing relationship between humans and

food in different periods and different social spaces (Mennell 1985; Caplan 1997:2ff.). Since food and eating play such a crucial part in people’s lives, these fields function as seismographs, sensitive to change. They capture and highlight every cultural shift of meaning, helping to shape new fields. For a cultural researcher, the plain fact *that* we eat is overshadowed by questions such as *what* and *where*, *when* and *how*, *why* and *together with whom*.² As we know, food is infinitely “more than food” (A. Salomonsson 1987).³

The rhetorical dimension of food and eating today seems to be as important as – if not more important than – the actual intake of food (cf. Bell & Valentine 1997). “Foodies” – people who passionately love to look at, read, write, and talk about food – are an ever-growing group.⁴ A special genre for describing food experiences has emerged. Consider this opening of an article about raw food, which could be read in *Gourmet* (6/98):

“On the plate, wafer-thin, light-beige slices of pilgrim scallop are spread out over a layer of warm, greyish-green lentils which have been turned in the fat from duck liver. The scallop slices are raw and almost melt on the tongue. The tender consistency contrasts with the roughness of the lentils, which is in turn softened by the duck fat. The generous, slightly sweet taste of the scallops meets the mineral, salty flavour of the lentils. The strange aroma of duck hits my nostrils as I swallow. The place is Brussels, the two-star restaurant L’Ecailler du Palais Royal.”

Another characteristic feature of the guise in which food appears today is its intertextuality. Olive oil may be taken here as an example of a key symbol in a field of discoursing voices. *Compatible* is the heading of a text under a beautifully shimmering picture of a little bottle of balsamic vinegar and a large bottle of olive oil.⁵ – “Like tomato and basil. Pasta and parmesan. Pizza and oregano. Garlic and lamb. Like a horse and carriage, they go together; the tasty, fruity, genuine virgin olive oil ...” the text continues in the minimalist language of advertising. Definitely compatible with the first

message is the next advertising text, which is propaganda for the EU quality labelling of food:

“Legend has it that the gods once wanted to give mortals a gift. They therefore created an area that was ideal for growing olives, that is, with plenty of sun and high above sea level. In this way they brought together the two factors that give olive oil its unique aroma and taste, and which still today adds a hint of sun to all the dishes of which it is part.”⁶

The idea of associating the golden liquid with the sun is a wise move on the part of the advertisers. For many people the taste of sun is synonymous with the taste of holidays. Memories of a special time and a special way of life are materialized back in the everyday cooking situation when the cap is screwed off the bottle. The same imaginative escape can easily be achieved by flicking through a Mediterranean cookery book or a travel account with gastro-nomic details. Olive oil also takes on a special shimmer in the EU Commission’s emphasis of its importance for “the cultural heritage of the Mediterranean region”. Its special position is comprehensible when it is presented as one of the proofs that cultural aspects are also taken into consideration in agricultural policy. Moreover, writers about food confirm the image of the nutritional superiority of olive oil, and the spread of olive oil to other countries has become a subject of scholarly study (see e.g. Skjelbred 1998). Descriptions of Mediterranean food capture readers with the aid of the same key words in tourist brochures, food magazines, and menus as in health recommendations and the EU’s regional policy (cf. Bell & Valentine 1997:156). Together they form representation regimes, convincing and persuasive descriptions with specific purposes: to see, reform, influence, or seduce.

There is covariation between the materiality of food – as raw ingredients or refined into dishes, as cookery books and culinary journalism, as large-scale industry and export commodities – and the *processes* of which it is an example: movements and anchorage in social and geographical spaces, the production of similarity and difference, demarcation and solidarity. In the last few decades food has proved to be

excellent fuel for flows – whether global or local – of cultural and economic capital, not infrequently intertwined with each other (cf. Zukin 1991, 1995). In this way, talk about food is also dependent on the *intercontextuality* that exists between, for example, the world of finance, the development of technology, media coverage, and the “ethnification” of food (cf. Appadurai 1997:187).

For food, as for other consumer goods, there are two main lines in the discussion of its role in cultural processes (Crang 1996:47). The first stresses the global homogenization of patterns of consumption, marketing, and the range of goods on offer, the process of Coca-Colafication or MacDonaldization (Hughes 1995). The second modifies the homogenization by drawing attention to the local practices that recharge global messages and commodities (cf. Miller 1987), resulting in “glocalism” (Featherstone 1995:9).⁷

Food production today shows a high degree of what we could call *displacement*, a reduction of the significance of physical space, in the direction of freedom of movement but also homelessness. Production no longer automatically takes place near the consumer; imports and exports criss-cross the globe. In multinational capitalism with rapid communication technology, “globalization”, with all its social relations and meanings, is intensified, redirected, and speeded up (Massey 1994). One result of this can be “a new order of uncertainty” (Appadurai 1998:228). Many researchers have responded to this uncertainty by reappraising and dissolving established concepts, such as culture and identity. A contrary way to handle this feeling is to consolidate and define words like culture and identity, often in terms of regional, local, ethnic, or original, and use them as tools in the ongoing organization and conceptualization of everyday life. Many consumers ask questions about traceability and production methods. They receive important answers in words that associate goods with certain places like “the region”, “the locality”, “the home”. Similarly, words like “genuine” and “traditional” insist on an explanation that includes determining origin and history. This genealogical interpretation (cf. Frykman 1999; Salomonsson 1999) of food

calls for concepts which can problematize a specific understanding of time, space, and place.

In the following text Europe will be treated as a conflict-ridden field of meaning-bearing practices and identity formation, a figure of thought under constant (re)construction (cf. Delanty 1995), rather than a defined place. Yet the narrative of “the European”, as so often, starts from “the national” (cf. Johler 1999a). In this case the nationality of the country is Swedish.

We Sell only Meat from Swedish Farmers

Conditions in Swedish chicken cages, pigsties, and cowsheds have become a national concern. Not just because Sweden has one of the world’s strictest laws on the prevention of cruelty to animals, but because animal welfare has become a crucial sales argument and a way to compete on the European market, where animal protection, food manufacture, and the labelling of food in Sweden are portrayed as *different*. Swedish pigs are more fortunate than their European counterparts. This is emphasized by the producers and displayed in full-colour signs and bold slogans in food stores: “We sell only meat from Swedish farmers” hung for a long time over the refrigerated counters of the Hemköp chain.

“In between the cheese shelves and the meat counter I hear a familiar voice. Well-articulated tones, accustomed to appearing in the media, in the secure and convincing dialect of Dalarna. What on earth is Gunde Swan doing at Hemköp in Ystad? Then I hear the voice of an older man from Skåne answering him, and I turn round. There I see the skiing hero striding over a beautifully flowering meadow together with a farmer in blue overalls. Their dialogue is enacted on a small, graphite-grey television monitor. The video is an advertising campaign for Hemköp’s own all-Swedish pigs. Gunde is visiting Annelöv in Skåne and talking about antibiotics.

‘You know, it’s just like in our day-care centres. If there’s too many children in one place, they get sick,’ says the farmer, scratching a perky piglet behind the ears. I can clearly see the straw in which the pigs are allowed to root

around, and I am then assured that his pigs – just like our children – are not given antibiotics except when they are sick. The door of the pigsty opens toward the meadows and the light pours in.” (Extract from field notes.)

The short film is skilfully built up around certain powerful symbols, each of which suggests a dark opposite. The farmer in his overalls, with the flowery meadow in the background, is a distinct contrast to the “pig factories” where the animals live a degrading and anonymous life. The assurance that there are not too many animals in this pigsty (which would cause sickness), leads our thoughts to overcrowding and neglect. The door stands open to the sunlight. In non-Swedish agribusiness there is no transparency or control; it is difficult to know what goes on in the darkness. Antibiotics and straw are two key concepts in today’s debate about food and cruelty to animals. Unlike many countries today, Sweden has a restrictive attitude to the use of antibiotics and growth hormones. The straw, which makes it possible for the pigs to root around, if not outdoors then at least indoors, has been made into a symbol of ethical livestock rearing. The pig in the logotype for Scan’s “Piggham” pork now stands on a stylized bed of straw, “which leads many consumers’ thoughts to animal welfare”.⁸

The subtext to which the marketing alludes consists of dead animal carcasses ground down to make fodder, cooped-up beef calves and pigs with mortal dread in their eyes as they go to slaughter. But these images do not originate in Sweden. They come from somewhere else: France, Germany, England, and even Denmark. And although the EU constantly has these issues on its agenda, it does not seem to have had an impact on all of Europe’s farmers. The media frequently show films about animal transports and terrible slaughtering methods, and the Swedish minister of agriculture, Margareta Winberg, once again gets the opportunity to state Sweden’s stance on the matter. The ghastly images that haunt us when we look at Italian or German sausages in the supermarket are here to stay, having become a virtually constant element in today’s society (cf. Gordon 1997:7) – possibly because Sweden is

now also a member of a European market without borders.

In 1995 the government appointed a commission “to analyse the market situation of the Swedish food industry after Sweden’s entry into the EU” (SOU 1997:25, p. 9). The report was entitled “Swedish Food – on EU Plates”. The title is a good reflection of the wishes shared by the Swedish government, farmers, and food producers: the food served on plates in Europe should be Swedish. The background to the inquiry was of course the anxiety that it would be European food on Swedish plates after the borders with the continent were opened. Would the domestic food industry be knocked out by cheaper, more sought-after European goods? The debate in the last decade about Swedish food and the food producers’ endeavours to provide “clean and safe food” were further heightened. Inquiries and forecasts about the future of Swedish agriculture and the food industry’s chances of survival, about market niches and sales arguments, were written from a special – European – perspective (cf. Jansson 1998). Sweden’s relation to Europe in general and the EU in particular set its stamp on the conclusions and recommendations, depending on whether the continent was regarded as a threat or an opportunity, as an impediment or a source of inspiration.

Even before this, different segments of Swedish food manufacture had been investigated to find new niche markets, specific export destinations which would fit the Swedish profile (Hanf & Böckenhof 1993; SOU 1997:102). At the same time, television and newspapers were filled with scare stories from Europe about mad cows with BSE, salmonella, and methods of keeping livestock that were beneath criticism from the Swedish point of view. The first reaction was fear that infection and hazardous foods would pour in over the borders, but gradually the chaotic situation in Europe was turned into an advantage for Swedish exports. Salmonella checks, the prohibition of growth hormones and antibiotics in fodder, plus far-reaching legislation to protect animals now became sales arguments to present to frightened European consumers. The Federation of Swedish Farmers, for example, coordinated a project called “Swedish Farm

Assurance”, which involved the sale of dairy produce, cured meats, and vegetables on the British market. Trust in the goods is created by the general image of ecological and ethical production which the Swedish Trade Council and the organization Food from Sweden have sought to give all Swedish food manufacture, partly through the possibility of tracing every milk carton and piece of cheese by means of a photograph and the name of the producer. The British consumers would even be able to come and visit the farmer or grower in Sweden.⁹

When formal borders are crossed and erased, uncertainty can result in new kinds of obstacles: when restrictions on the import of foreign food disappeared with Sweden’s entry into the EU, ideas about infection, unclean food, and unethical treatment of animals set up new borders (cf. Jansson 1999). Like other “fears”, those about food are culture-specific and tied to a particular time. What makes buyers define Sweden as a producer of desirable goods? How does one build up the image of a place which cares about animals, humans, and the environment?

Happy Shit and Swedish Country Food

It is becoming increasingly difficult to go into a food store to buy something for dinner without being afflicted at least once by a guilty conscience for not choosing the more expensive but environment-friendly egg box, milk carton, or detergent refill bag. Despite this, only 10–15% of the consumers in a survey in 1998 chose these products, mainly because of the high price (*SDS* 1 February 1999). The food stores have realized what a good sales argument an ecologically labelled product has become and have therefore launched their own quality trade marks or, like Hemköp, have selected their own pig breeders and egg suppliers who do not keep their hens in cages.¹⁰ A discussion on quality and ethics has also been going on for some time in the production stage, among both management and unions, and in the Federation of Swedish Farmers, under the motto “Sweden’s Farmers on the way towards the world’s cleanest agriculture”. An important role was played in this debate by KRAV; the full name of this organization is now *Kontrollföreningen för*

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ekologisk odling (Association for the Control of Organic Cultivation), but the older acronym also gives the Swedish word *krav*, meaning “demand”. The expression “happy shit” (for which an English equivalent might be “cheerful bugger”) comes from one of their posters showing the rear end of a happy, dirty pig with a curly tail. Through time, however, KRAV has become much more than politically correct pigs.¹¹ At their website (www.krav.se), for example, you can order a book of “Delicious Recipes with Modest Demands”, in which Anders Olsson, chef at the KRAV-certified restaurant in the Swedish Parliament, “leads us into the realm of tastes and aromas”, serving dishes such as “barbecued steak with tomato and zucchini ragout”, with all the ingredients apart from salt and water being KRAV-labelled.

In 1985, the year when KRAV started its operations, the meat-producing companies in the Scan group (owned by Swedish farmers)

started their programme “Care in Animal Husbandry” to counter the consumers’ criticism of “stressed pigs”. This criticism culminated in December 1985, when it was revealed that the carcasses of dead animals were used as fodder, that substandard cured meat products were sold, and that distasteful slaughtering methods were used to produce food. And this time the criticism concerned conditions in Sweden (Jansson 1998). The business has been cleaned up since then, and Swedish agriculture has acquired a good reputation by European standards. Yet this does not mean that there is no resistance. The actions carried out by Swedish animal rights activists, for example in Umeå, show that there is still criticism of Swedish food production (Abnersson 1998).

It has been found, however, that the consumers in the long run want something more than just to feel safe. In a debate book about food and Europe written in 1993, Marit Paulsen said “competing on a free market is not just a matter of being clean underneath, as Swedish honesty demands, but of being both clean underneath and attractive on the surface” (Paulsen & Andersson 1993:61). The same idea colours the ambition to give “added value” to customers who choose Scan, a familiar and dependable but rather boring and respectable trade mark. Through product development and different packaging, Scan Foods want to inspire the joy of food, to generate experiences, warmth, and appreciation, as we read in an article in *Nytt från Skanek* (1999/2:8).

Another marketing attempt is “Swedish Country Food”,¹² an association for local small-scale production, with farm shops bearing names like Gloria’s Apple Farm, Knorrevången (Curly Tail Field) Pork, Nicoll’s Snail Breeding, and Agneta’s Flowers and Bees. In brochures, one for each province, we are urged to “Discover the pleasures of country life and search out the different shops.” Small symbols indicate whether there is a café or restaurant, parking for tourist coaches, and handicap-friendly premises. These little signs reveal the intention of making a visit to the shop into a special experience (cf. Berger & Kindblom 1996). Munkebäck Farm, for example, entices visitors to its shop with the words “Buy your food in peace and calm, while

the children pat the small animals on the farm, feel the idyll of the farm and the rural smells..."¹³

The counterpart published by KRAV is called "Guide to Farm Shops". The greatest advantage of these special places is that the customer can buy directly from the farmer – and of course buy organic produce. "Imagine finding a shop where they sell new-laid eggs, tender early vegetables, freshly baked bread, sun-warm tomatoes, sweet-sour strawberries. [...] Then imagine that you have a shop like that just round the corner. It's not a dream, it's reality."¹⁴

KRAV labelling, programmes for ethical treatment of animals, picking your own strawberries can all be interpreted as attempts to restore confidence and give people a sense of increased control (cf. Beardsworth & Keil 1997:168; Ljungberg 2001). It is striking how often the past is used in the argumentation, partly to evoke a "more natural" kind of agri-culture, partly as a source from which to draw original and unadulterated food. The food is usually described in comparative terms: safer, more natural, more secure, guaranteed genuine in relation to an anonymous production chain in our deceptive modern times.

"Do you want to create a better future for you and your children? Then you should join forces with the "backward" people here at Hemköp. For we are indeed backward. We are endeavouring to get back to a world that was simpler, more clearly coherent. We want to recreate a society that puts the environment, health, and the future first. A society where our food comes from close by, where we know how the crops are grown and how the animals are reared. Then, and only then, can we assume responsibility for the environment, for ethics and quality" (From Hemköp's environmental information).¹⁵

If it had only been as simple a matter as taking a step backwards and suddenly finding oneself in a bygone time like the one evoked above. But instead of finding unambiguous signs in the study of what things were like in the past, we see ambiguity and contradictions. Of course there were no synthetic additives, but the food was not always fresh. Of course it was reassuring to know that it was your own pig you were

putting on the table, but it was far from certain that the same pig had lived in particularly happy circumstances in its draughty, dark, tumbledown sty. "Recreate" may not be the right word to use if we want a society where environmental concern and the health of animals and humans are always put first.

New contexts are now being created, which are neither a copy of the old ones nor a continuation of modern ones. Today the idea is that the consumer should be combining pre-packed salad mixtures (oak-leaf, rossi, frisée) from Italy, ecologically bred chickens from the farm shop, bake-up ciabatta from the ICA chain, and blueberry soup with health-promoting bacteria from ProViva. Specially imported quality is crossed with sure ecology, fresh-as-it-could-be with functional food, local tradition with hi-tech. A representative of one of Europe's biggest marketing companies, the Gira group, pointed out in a forecast that the fragmented identities and differing social tastes of the twenty-first century will make it easier for exclusive niche markets to become established.

The EU and Traceability

The strong feelings of anxiety and indignation, powerlessness and anger that are often expressed in the debate about the quality and safety of food are materialized in the discussions about labelling. Labelling is used to give information about the designation, composition, price, volume or weight, uses, qualities, durability, and origin of a commodity, or to attract people to buy it.¹⁶ The demand for facts and transparency must be balanced against comprehensibility and clarity. "Water, salt, flavour enhancers (E 621, E 631, E 627), veal stock, sugar, aroma, vegetable oil, thickener (E 415), acidity regulator (E 262 citric acid), red wine, preservative (E 202), lactose." From this declaration the consumer who wants to buy a 125 ml bottle of veal fond has to work out whether there are substances that may be hazardous to health, ethically indefensible, or politically unacceptable.

Labels, stamps, and certificates have become important cultural symbols at the interface between the consumers' anxiety and ambivalence about modern food production, and the

producers' attempts to convince people and improve their tarnished reputation in the wake of BSE, salmonella, synthetic additives, and genetically modified vegetables. The EU regulations for "new foodstuffs" underline the safety assessment, possible risks for the consumer, misleading marketing claims about, for example, health benefits, and how much the new food differs nutritionally from the food that it is intended to replace.¹⁷ The regulations include the foodstuffs made with GMO (genetically modified organisms). The opposition shown by Swedish consumers to genetic modification does not seem to be due to fear or a sense of ignorance, but more than anything else to rejection on ethical grounds (cf. *Genvägar till ny mat* 1998; Wibeck 1998; Fredriksson 2000).

The need to legitimate and control, to classify and label, is found in consumer organizations and ecological associations, as well as among EU officials and food producers. As a result, the EU's Consumer Protection Directorate-General has examined the matter in depth, and at the end of 1997 the Swedish government appointed a person to inquire into consumer information about food (cf. SOU 1999:7). The labelling of food has to cover increasingly larger fields of information: health aspects, allergenic substances, and religious, ethical, and political considerations. For many people, labelling has become a symbolic issue which is a matter of democracy and citizen's rights (cf. *Om märkning av gentekniskt modifierade livsmedel* 1996, *Märkning och marknadsföring av livsmedel* 1998).

The locally produced food that is sold at markets and in farm shops rarely has any declaration of contents. On bread that is baked right in the grocery store, no one demands a list of ingredients (cf. SOU 1999:7, p. 79). We trust in the quality and genuineness of the product, since the transparency and presence act as a guarantee (cf. Berger & Kindblom 1996). It is more difficult to convince the customer of this guarantee when the food is produced in a distant factory. Here quality guarantees and environmental certificates replace transparency and direct contact.

"From Stable to Table" is the umbrella term for the EU's attempt to integrate agriculture, producers, retailers, and consumers in the

assessment of safety and risk in food manufacture. A new approach was presented at the end of 1997, the basic idea of which is based on "the commitment to full transparency".¹⁸ Scientific committees, risk analyses, and inspections guarantee this.¹⁹

In the EU there is a fundamental difference in views on consumer guidance. The side represented by Sweden and other countries advocate control and labelling of goods before they reach the supermarket shelves. Whatever product the buyer chooses, certain fundamental safety requirements and properties must be satisfied. Other countries, however, think that it is the responsibility of the consumer to examine the product and decide whether or not to buy, say, a children's bicycle without brakes. This difference is also exemplified by the campaign for food safety that was mounted at the end of 1998 in all the EU countries. France's aim in this venture was to make consumers aware of their own responsibility for what they choose to buy. The title of the campaign, "Food safety is a shared responsibility: the responsible consumer is informed and active", reflects a compromise between different outlooks.

A Swedish publication entitled "A Foreign Assignment in the Service of the Consumers" (1996) describes how European consumer guidance can be perceived from a Swedish point of view. Concerning the fact that producers and lobbyists in Europe get indignant about Swedish consumer laws and the "know-all" attitude they reflect, the Swedish representative of the National Board for Consumer policies writes:

"That is when you bring out the European in you. The people out there should not have worse conditions than we have! This is an example of how to make a virtue of necessity – thinking in terms of Europe instead of Sweden ... the only strategy for retaining what we already have. [...] That is how we Scandinavians can become Europeans. And we Swedish consumer representatives will become increasingly better strategists – on behalf of Europe's consumer" (1996:20).

The task of controlling how producers comply with legislation on food safety is the duty of

each member state, but the EU is supposed to monitor how this responsibility is handled. This point has proved controversial. In the group of representatives from different consumer organizations which has an advisory function to the EU Commission, it is emphasized that EU legislation on food must permit the member countries to adopt laws of their own when they feel that the EU laws give insufficient protection to the consumer. The group also says that the harmonized regulations must permit regional differences and the local character of food.

The question of self-determination has been highlighted in Sweden in the debate about the “monster bull”, the Belgian Blue. Swedish authorities wanted to prohibit the breeding and import of this bull but were overruled by the EU. Now chefs, restaurateurs, and food writers are being urged to boycott the meat, which is said to taste worse in both a physiological and a moral sense.

An important aspect of labelling that is rarely in focus in consumer organizations, but frequently among producers, is the labelling that makes the consumer choose one particular product rather than another: for example, ecological rather than industrial, Italian rather than German, vegetarian rather than animal, and – European rather than American.

Protecting European Distinctiveness

“In the fourteenth century, in a mountainous little part of Europe, the farmer who leased grazing land was obliged to pay rent to the owner in proportion to the amount of milk that was produced. When the owner came to visit, the crafty farmer did not milk his cows fully, waiting instead until the owner had gone before he finished the milking. Not only was the milk from the second milking illegal – it was also different from the first. The farmer made a cheese that was not like any other. It was homogeneous, soft, and lightly salted. A forbidden but alluringly delicious cheese. After four centuries in secrecy, and as soon as payment in milk was replaced by jangling coins, our cheese could finally take its place on every table.”

The tale of the farmer milking in stealth can be

read in an advertisement (*Allt om mat* 1997/14) financed by the European Community. The text is flanked by a full-page portrait of a rosy, shorthaired young woman dressed in a blue checked blouse and a white apron; a modern-style dairymaid with a lovely round cheese in her arms. The advertisement is not really trying to sell cheese, but to publicize the EU’s quality-promoting measures for “products with a history”. To protect this history, producers can apply to have a product certified with stamps such as Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), and Traditional Specialty Guaranteed (TSG). Registration of the first two designations began in the summer of 1996, soon filling several pages to which names are constantly being added, such as Sobrasada de Mallorca (Spanish ham), Caciotta d’Urbino (Italian cheese), and Katlenburger Burgbergquelle (German mineral water). Only two Swedish products are registered, Svecia cheese and the pyramid cake that is a specialty of Skåne.

The Traditional Speciality Guaranteed has not enjoyed the same success. Only a few products have been registered, most of them being brands of Belgian beer. Mozzarella will be registered, while applications for a Spanish ice cream and a Spanish ham are being considered. Another Spanish product, roughly “special milk from a quality-assured farm”, was turned down after protests from Northern European countries, which claimed that all their milk is produced in the same way as the Spanish milk. These protests indicate that the labelling process is not just a curiosity or a matter of playing to the gallery, but can have consequences for the sales success of a product.

The justifications for the three EU designations may be read on the website of the Sixth Directorate-General, which deals with agricultural policy, and where quality issues have an icon of their own. The visitor is greeted by eleven smiling people, one of whom is the dairymaid in the advertisement. They are either wearing aprons of different kinds, overalls and boots, or equipped with special attributes like the beekeeper. They are all holding out a selected product: olive oil, Parma ham, oysters, a baby lamb, and so on. The text says “Specific products

catch the eye”, and the aim of the designations is to specify certain products above others and to protect their manufacturing processes against copies and forgeries. To label a product with the words Protected Designation of Origin, it must have a certain quality or certain characteristics which are the result of unique geographical and human factors, such as the farmer being forced to milk his cows in stealth and therefore keeping the best milk. Certain ecological conditions lead to specific ways of preserving food, for example, by drying, while other climatic conditions give rise to specific products, such as Alpine cheese. Production must take place in the defined *type* of geographical area. It must therefore be possible to associate the geographical designation of origin with one particular place on the map, for example, Parma, which is famous for its air-dried ham.

Until November 1998 the actual marking of foodstuffs was extremely discreet. On the plastic-wrapped Danablu cheese from Denmark I have to look for a long time before I see the small combination of letters that stand for the designation. It is clear that the labelling was not intended as a sales argument in the shops, with the aim of attracting customers. Gradually, however, all three designations have been given their own logotype – “a logo guaranteeing authenticity”. The blue and yellow emblem is a graphic representation of furrows in a newly ploughed field, placed in a sun of twelve stars indicating the member states of the European Union.

The quality drive for certain products has a symbolic meaning for EU policy (cf. Johler 1999b). Firstly, it is a way to counter criticism of a common Europe that is said to advocate uniformity and the levelling out of all that is local and specific. Emphasizing geographical differences and underlining “traditional” methods of production is a way to display the EU’s regional policy and simultaneously a proof of solidarity with socially vulnerable areas within the community. Perhaps the two new logotypes will function as a clearer, more obvious testimony that the regions will be allowed to play a crucial role in the future Europe. Secondly, the drive is an important part of the common agricultural policy which seeks to make surplus farmers find niches, to produce things that

cannot be replaced by any other product. Thirdly, these three designations can also be interpreted as a response to the consumers’ criticism of non-transparent manufacturing processes and questions of origin.

In the construction of the regional, certain places are formulated and articulated. Districts and provinces, towns and villages are pinpointed and become particularly “regional”. The representations that emerge – regions with distinctive regional features – are used to include and exclude, to demarcate and define what is in and out. The EU’s different designations to guarantee a geographical origin are helpful in this process. In the justification for the designations and in advertisements for the certified products, we find an emphasis on the importance of “belonging” somewhere, and how crucial local characteristics are. It is a matter of creating order by placing products on a certain point on the map and protecting this unique position against the threat of pirate copies. At the same time, the result of a “guarantee of geographical designation” is a paradoxical lack of place. The actual geographic place of production is of no interest; the decisive thing is the *ideal type* of an Alpine environment, a coastal climate, or specific social conditions. This form of *displacement* makes it easier for products and producers to move between different markets and still be perceived as “genuine”. This is a time when the particular has great chances of becoming universal. The recipe for the authentic and unique regional cuisine can be found in Skåne, in Slovenia, in Galicia, and in many other places where people have realized how useful the region is for strengthening – or weakening – identities.

Regional Pragmatism

The EU is anxious to present the aura of a long historical tradition, cultural heritage, and genuineness associated with “regional” food as a *European* characteristic. On the home front, however, the regions are primarily local entities, which would prefer to assert uniqueness rather than community. The talk of food and the talk of the region have interacted for a few decades to reinforce each other’s position, for example, in

the struggle to attract tourists (Köstlin 1998) or in local cultural life (cf. A. Salomonsson 1987, 1994). In recent years this cooperation has been extended; from having primarily involved museums, local history societies, and study associations it now engages local business, municipal and county councils. The purpose is not so much, as it used to be, to search out forgotten dishes, the older and more original the better. The president of the Skåneland Gastronomic Academy, Sven-Olle R. Olsson, writes in the preface to the book *Skånsk mat och kultur* ("Scanian Food and Culture", 1998:7): "Our Scanian cuisine should not stagnate and become an antiquated museum piece; it must be constantly developed with Scanian ingredients and according to the principles of Scanian food culture." Problems of where to draw boundaries may arise, as for example when a company like the Bästekille Tomatoes, which is part of the "Regional Culinary Heritage" project, in its brochure "Recipes & Hints! Genuine Food from Österlen" launches Bästekille chutney: "Delicious with meat, in stews, with tacos, when you wok." The Academy's definition of "Scanian food" as something "which has been made for several generations in Skåne [...] from Scanian ingredients" (p. 7) is difficult to satisfy when it comes to either tomatoes or chutney. But I do not believe that any of the involved parties is interested in taking the definitions to extremes. In practice, regional food culture seems to be an inclusive rather than an exclusive concept.

"Region" is often used as a word with an automatic, natural meaning of belonging and local pride, besides genuineness and tradition (cf. Hughes 1995). This use of the word, which is so often described in research as being essentialist (cf. e.g. Idvall & Salomonsson 1996), also has a pragmatic aspect. It is these cultural meanings that reinforce the sales value of the region and the regional products. The word is supposed to function as a tool for creating a local *economic* identity, in the sense that it will be possible for people to make a living within the region. That is why "region" often becomes synonymous with production and networks of economic connections (cf. Törnqvist 1998).

Despite the pragmatic elasticity of "regional food culture", it is interesting to ask oneself

when "regional" or "genuine" food ceases to be regional or genuine. *The New Soul Food Cook Book*²⁰ presents healthier variants of traditional favou-rites. Soul food need no longer be "off-limits because of excess fat, cholesterol, sugar, and salt". The book claims to offer a new view of Afro-American cuisine, the food being made with "leaner meats, egg whites, less (or no) oil, nonfat dairy products, less sodium, and fewer calories".²¹ In the days of seasonal self-sufficiency, the now shunned butter, cream, and eggs were sought-after ingredients, which also manifested prosperity and good taste. Fat is no longer a wholly positive element in the food that is presented as rustic, solid, rural, and natural. Today old dishes and ingredients are being reinstated in low-calorie variants (cf. *Skånsk mat och kultur*). The changed symbolic charge shows the difficulty of holding up certain phenomena as referents to a shared past (Massey 1994). For some people, for example, the Scanian culinary culture signals natural ingredients and tied and tested recipes, while for others it means fatty, unappetizing food.

A Culinary Heritage

For anyone interested in food, the region is an appropriate scene for tourism. Distances are short enough to allow a morning excursion, afternoon coffee, and Sunday dinner. Above all, regions are perceived as pure and secure. The consumer can feel safe in eating and drinking things that are produced locally, in a way that both business and tourist interest claim is more natural, genuine, and traditional. Maybe it also tastes better because of "the flavour of knowing" what you are putting in your mouth. Eating locally or regionally is simultaneously an act of showing solidarity with the district, perhaps in opposition to national or supranational power.

This longing for purity recurs in other ways of articulating and practising the regional. The growing cultural heritage industry may be seen as "a nostalgic attempt to revivify pure and indigenous regional cultures against what are perceived as threatening forms of cultural hybridity" (Morley & Robins 1995:8). A harmless but economically significant threat is the global fast food industry, which is singled out as an

enemy that is best combated with the aid of lively regional cuisines. A “food without identity” will be conquered with “the flavours and savours of regional cooking and banish the degrading effects of Fast Food”, as we read in the manifesto of the Slow Food Movement.

The tourist brochure “Regional Food Culture in South-East Skåne” never mentions the food experiences that are much more common than eel feasts and goose dinners, namely, the Friday pizza, the Saturday kebab, or the family hamburger. Although these are statistically a “part of the region’s natural food and culture”, they are not in the list of restaurants that boast the blue-and-white enamel sign with the chef’s cap and the words “Regional Culinary Heritage”. These include restaurants like Snogeholm Castle, Måns Byckare, Karlaby Kro, Vitemölle Badhotell, and Vårdshuset Österlen. The *regional* is interpreted and translated into different symbolic languages, which vary from solid traditionalism to bold innovation:

“Brösarps Gästgifveri:

Pink-roasted Haväng lamb
with tomato crème, young spring vegetables
and sage gravy
Price: 190 kronor

Lamb from Haväng. Tomatoes from
Bästekille.

Root vegetables from Löderup. Herbs from
Rörum.

Situated at the door to Österlen is this romantic Inn going back to 1684. Inside its warm red brick walls you will experience the genuine traditional of Scanian inn-keeping. [...] Every meal is a feast. Enjoy tasty, well-cooked Scanian food in a pleasant, cosy atmosphere in rustic style. The food comes from our neighbours, that is to say, the growers and breeders in the district. It could not be fresher or more wholesome.

Brummers Krog:

Stolen herring
Raskarum chicken with tasty root vegetables
Home-made cake
195 kronor
[all of the above in untranslatable local
dialect]

Just a few tables, the first roses of summer, a friendly reception. Monsieur at the pots and pans, Madame in the dining room. A hand-written menu that requires a great deal of verbal explanation and numerous gestures [...] In the dining room a distinctive buzz of human voices and laughs. We are all musicians in the same orchestra – the only real restaurant music. Hunger and expectations. [...] That particular page in the photo album smells of laughter, roses, and tarragon.”

The “Regional Culinary Heritage” project was started in 1995 in southeastern Skåne in collaboration with the nearby Danish island of Bornholm. It is a part of the “Four Corners” project, partially financed by the EU Commission as part of their “network for rural development”, which also includes Rügen in Germany and Swinoujście in Poland. The aim is “to offer tourists and consumers regional food in an easy way” by supporting restaurants, food producers, farmers, and fishermen “who have a distinct regional connection”. It is also considered important to create a distinct image for the region’s whole culinary culture,²² and one way to do this is to hold fairs, seminars, and conferences with delegates from regional authorities, business, and research.

In 1997 the project was entrusted by the EU’s Tenth Directorate-General with the task of conducting a pilot study to see how a similar concept could be built up elsewhere in Europe. One of the main aims was to strengthen and highlight cultural and specific characteristics of the different regional identities in a united Europe.²³ Regions, which are interested in participating in the network, apply for membership and are for a time candidate regions. They have to observe certain criteria to become full members, and to ensure that everyone understands the criteria; a two-day information course is held for two representatives of the region. When this has been accomplished and co-operation between different local parties with an interest in food has been established, the region can apply to become an approved region, after which it can use the logotype with the white chef’s cap with the name of the region under it. Restaurants and shops can also display the same sign to

attract customers. The region is also presented on the network's website.

These presentations differ depending on whether the text has been written especially for this purpose or the content comes from a general tourist brochure about the region. De Peel in Holland, Lüneburger Heide in Germany, and Öland in Sweden are those which are most sparsely described, and with the emphasis on the geographical justification for being regarded as a distinct region. Demarcated by the River Maas as a natural boundary between two provinces, De Peel is described as “an area with many possibilities to serve as a natural heart of a big region”.²⁴ Østfold in Norway invokes more traditional rhetoric in tourist contexts: “Here in the footsteps of the Vikings, among exciting cultural ruins, you can enjoy fishing, canoeing,

golf and cycling, and of course traditional food based upon the raw materials of the seasons and deliciously served.” The presentation concludes by welcoming people to visit “a land of adventure and daydreams”.

Galicia, La Rioja, Levante, Castilla y León in Spain and Central Macedonia in Greece have all placed greater emphasis on distinctive culinary features. They plant clues about the reasons for the strong position of the Mediterranean cuisine at present, emphasizing the fresh, natural products that are said to give infinite sensations of colour, flavour, and smell. The wealth of variation tends to be exemplified with lists of different kinds of fish, shellfish, meat, vegetables, cheeses, and more specific delicacies such as “the dried meat from León, the ham from Guijuelo, the morucha's flesh, the



You can feel quite safe when you know it is homemade! A telling example of marketing strategies built on intimacy and a personal relationship.

Zamora's cheese, the kidney bean from Barco de Avila, the lentil from Armuña..."

"Regional food" is not just any food. It has an established origin and a documented history and therefore is not anonymous or insignificant. Products that cannot invoke a specific place of manufacture, "a geographical lore", must create other sales arguments to inspire confidence, such as "a cultural biography" (Crang 1996:53). An example of how geography is "culturalized" is "pesto-flavoured diced bacon" (which moreover contains chicken extract!), a product that could hardly be sold in Italy, but which is associated here in Sweden with "Mediterranean food" (cf. Hodgson & Bruhn 1993; Askegaard & Ger n.d.).

When Food is Given a Face

A woman leans forward invitingly, smiling at the package. She is wearing an apron and has flour on her fingers. Annikki is baking pizza slices in a rather well to do Mediterranean kitchen. Behind her on the sideboard is a pot with twigs of olive, lemon, and bay. White tiles with a Mediterranean pattern in blue make up the backdrop. Yet it says on the package that the company that makes the product is not in Italy but in Finland. Annikki is probably not in Italy either, unless she has gone there and taken with her the first-class ingredients from Finland's pure nature, that is, Finnish pork and Finnish salami.

The packaging concept – Mediterranean romanticism on the front and Finnish security on the back – is successful and proven today. There is a brief, almost self-ironic comment on the promise of Annikki's "genuine pizza tradition". The advertisers have chosen not to translate the words *Tosi hyvää* ("Really good"); instead the buyer is urged to "taste so you will understand what she says". The Mediterranean charm is mixed with the exoticism of the Finland's primeval forests. It really makes no difference whether the pizza is of Finnish or Italian origin, if it is national at all. The crucial point is that there *is* an origin to tell people about.

Different aspirations are exemplified in this type of marketing. One is to regain the lost confidence of the consumer in food produced on a large scale. The manufacture is given the illusion of having been moved from the factory

back to the home. This type of marketing is a guarantee that nothing "unnatural" occurs in the production process, which is intrinsically natural and genuine. New products are launched with the aid of personalization and intimacy. Mamma Scan, Mother Anna's gherkins, pictures of genuine farming couples stuck on the chicken wrapper, rosy women at the baking table, wine growers in berets screwing up their eyes, ancient Asians on packages of frozen dumplings. The faces that meet us on various goods today come from two different categories: those who have actually made the things we buy, and those who have been selected to represent a product with a picture taken in a completely different context.

The first group includes the rule of the KRAV organization, which states that none of their products may be sold anonymously (although there are not always pictures), and the campaign for Swedish food on the British market, where all goods were traceable to a specific maker. It is often "unsafe" food, such as chicken, meatballs, or pork that is sold in this way. Yet even in the launching of a new brand of soured milk, Öresundsfil, by the dairy Skånemejerier, traceability was held up as an important benefit for the customer. On the dairy's website, under the heading "Trace the origin of Öresundsfil", you can click your way to the soured milk, which is "produced by and for people in the Öresund region". Under the name of each farm there is a description of where the farm is located, who owns it, who farms it, what type of agriculture is pursued, and the business philosophy of the farm. "The owners Yvonne and Arne Nilsson own equal shares of the property, and together they have four daughters, Monica, Malin, Maria, and Marlene, who help out when there is a lot of work to be done." The text is accompanied by a picture of the family having a coffee break in the grass together with the cows. Several suppliers of milk are presented, together with a presentation of the company responsible for the dairy transports. Yet here the traceability comes to an end. The personalization lets us know the names of the children, but does not really tell us very much about the production process. What does the certification of the milk mean? What happens inside the factory where the soured milk is finally produced? The transparency and



Instead of actually going to Italy you can enjoy the Mediterranean atmosphere just by serving a ready-made, frozen pasta-dish, the company of Findus tries to convince us of.

wealth of detail risk becoming deceptive instead of convincing.

Perhaps that is why the second category of representations is all the more important for convincing the customer. Above all this concerns “lifestyle food”, for which the advertisers want to establish a mimetic relation with the buyer. Here the photographer has shifted the focus from the supposed producer to a metaphorical image. On the pasta dish there is a fat Italian restaurateur shaking a tablecloth at his trattoria; on the Mexican beans we see a bent woman with a child in colourful clothes; the Swedish meatballs are accompanied by a sturdy, healthy-looking young blond woman in wellington boots. The calm, uncomplicated, sincere life radiating from these pictures can be shared by anyone who eats the same food. This way of marketing and labelling a commodity may be called mimetic because it seeks to resemble a particular lifestyle and particular values by material transmission, that is, by eating (cf. Taussig 1992, ch. 8). Sitting down to an inviting Mediterranean meal with home-produced wine among friends and family hour after hour is enticing for those who have a

round-the-clock career in one place, a family in another place, and friends in a third. Time is an important component in these picture-based narratives. Calm, harmony, a relaxed tempo or timelessness are in stark contrast to one of the product’s strongest sales arguments: that it takes only three minutes to cook in the microwave oven.

The market’s stylization and iconization of certain ideals and ways of life is one way to answer the consumers’ questions, similar to what the EU is attempting with its quality labelling. Origin, history, and local character are captured in pictures and snappy sentences. According to a venerable catering company named Maison Pierre, this is a sign that “the emotion society is replacing the IT society. The consumer of the future wants to buy something more than just food, preferably something that tells a story, or food with a home-made character that you recognize” (*Gourmet* 1998/6:18).

Yet there are certain representations that would be impossible in marketing. It is difficult to imagine pictures of Danish chicken breeders, or geneticists in the laboratory, busy modifying

soya beans or tomato plants. There are some things the consumer does not want to be reminded of.²⁵

The Added Cultural Value of the Economy

European food, as we have seen, has for many people become associated with an imagined “Mediterranean cuisine”, where refined tastes are conjured out of healthy ingredients in a relatively simple and comprehensible form of culinary art. This is a model, a pleasurable ideal, for people who lack the time and opportunity to cook the food in the way a Tuscan farmer’s wife can. They resort to pesto-flavoured diced bacon and pasta sauce in powder form. Moreover, the Swedish flag on the bacon is perceived as a guarantee that the pigs have not been transported and slaughtered in painful forms. For however enticingly the European cuisine is presented, it has been surrounded by suspicion and criticism after a series of food scandals. The EU has tried to intervene with the aid of white books, scientific committees, and increased controls. Yet it seems as if the most useful tool for resolving this paradox of boundless admiration and profound suspicion has been the talk of the region and the campaign for regional food.

Regions right now are extremely effective political instruments (cf. Idvall 2000; Berger *et al.* 2000). As entities they are easy to grasp, of a manageable size for rapid mobilization. They do not bear the same historical ballast of power, and they do not have the same problem with democracy that afflicts supranational associations. They seem natural, self-evident, organic formations and have therefore acquired an almost unquestioned right to exist.

There seems to be a vigorous notion that regions are good examples of cultural variation and diversity, of the unusual and the unique. The way they are described nevertheless shows many similar features. Similar advantages as regards landscape and climate, history and cultural heritage, traditions and customs are emphasized. Being European, which is often formulated in terms of history and culture, is an important epithet, for example, in descriptions

of the regions belonging to the Regional Culinary Heritage project. This highlights the profound historical heritage through four thousand years of Greek civilization or through prehistoric remains. The emphasis on Europe’s fine culture is exemplified in the monasteries, places of pilgrimage, and cities approved by Unesco as World Heritage Sites.

The European Community today, according to the English journalist Neal Ascherson, “will travel from the western Europe of nation-states via the Brussels superstate to the Europe of Heimats” (cited in Morley & Robins 1995:89). The alleged security and sense of belonging of the Heimat is often portrayed as regional in the EU’s efforts to reduce the significance of the nation-state. The *regional* has been allowed to symbolize the failures of the nation-state.

Above all, regions are *local*, and in the ontology of the local we find today one of the most powerful tools in the rhetoric about European food. The poetry of local foodstuffs (cf. Taussig 1992:4), that is, the narrative and visual portrayal in marketing and labelling, typically promises small-scale production and traceability. The region has become the EU’s space for staging the desire for European solidarity, a European cultural heritage, and European quality. In many ways, the local breeder or food producer embodies the promise of authenticity and naturalness, tradition and history, which the EU wants to emphasize as a counter to the scandal-ridden food industry or the American market.

By buying a product that has been categorized as a part of the culinary heritage, one also becomes part of the new “e-economy”. This time the “e” does not stand for electronic trade on the net, but – according to the trend-conscious magazine *Elle Interiör* – says something much more. “The real e-economy is beginning to grow among all those who understand that ethics, esthetics, ecology, and empathy are more important issues.” A company in keeping with the times has a clear identity, genuineness, honesty, and nearness, and its operations must be based on trustworthiness and inner values (*Elle Interiör* 3/2000, p. 64).

E-trade could also mean European trade, in which European goods are given the same aura of culture and historical legitimacy that the EU

fondly stresses in its descriptions of what constitutes a common European identity. One of the goals set up for twenty-first-century European cultural policy is increased mutual knowledge of the European peoples' culture and history by exhibiting inherited culture of European significance.²⁶ By making people conscious of "shared cultural values and roots" it will be possible to achieve the express goal of increasing "the sense of belonging to the same community", while also maintaining respect for national and regional differences.²⁷

Perhaps the EU, by launching "European" food that is certified and traceable and with designated origin, is "a company in keeping with the times", which has understood the importance of a trade mark that gives added cultural value. A trademark must communicate a clear feeling and image, but this image also needs a spatial anchorage. Here the region comes into its own.

Notes

1. From the European Community's First European Community framework programme in support of culture (2000–2004).
2. At the same time, some scholars stress that the specific thing about the analysis of food and eating is the dual nature: the element of cultural construction is balanced by the fact that the object of study is one of "the areas of our lives that is close to biology, to which we must all relate, making up the constants in our lives: the intake of food, sexual maturity, love, ageing, etc." (Kayser Nielsen 1998:4). However, I do not find this reason enough to become part of the "post-constructivist cultural analysis" advocated for food studies by the Danish researcher Niels Kayser Nielsen (1997:19). This is not to say that the sensual and bodily dimensions of eating are not interesting – on the contrary, but as cultural variables rather than constants.
3. Swedish ethnological food research has sought to place dishes, ingredients, cooking, and eating in a social and historical context in order to draw attention to cultural meanings in a broader context (cf. Valeri 1977; Bringéus 1988; Nordström 1988).
4. Cf. Anna Burstedt's discussion of the cookery book as a form of experience (1999).
5. From *Allt om Mat* 16, 1997, advertisement for Zeta olive oil.
6. From *Allt om Mat* 16, 1997.
7. The idea that globalization in terms of flows, movements, and increased cultural contacts is a

late modern phenomenon is criticized by, among others, the anthropologist Jonathan Friedman, who argues that "globalization" as a flow of power, goods, money, and information has existed ever since the first commercial civilizations traded with each other (Friedman 1997:269; cf. Appadurai 1997 and Hall 1991 for a discussion of "new" and "old" globalization).

8. From *Nytt från Skanek* 1999/2, p. 9.
9. Article in *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* (SDS), 17 June 1998, and conversation with one of the certified milk suppliers. Compare also the launch of the soured milk Öresundsfil by Skånemejerier, discussed below.
10. The Hemköp chain claims that it tired of politicians not being able to implement a ban on poultry cages in 1998 as they had promised, so it simply signed contracts with its own egg suppliers. This initiative was rewarded with an invitation to Astrid Lindgren, the author who has combated cruelty to animals, and a diploma from the Swedish Society Against Painful Experiments on Animals (<http://www.hemkop.se>, as of 9 November 1998).
11. Today there are over 2,000 approved products, compared with roughly a hundred in 1985, when the association was started on the initiative of four ecological organizations. The aim was to achieve a credible labelling system for ecological food, by compiling rules for ecological production and by supervising compliance with these rules.
12. See further the brochure from Svensk Lantmat, *Handla Din mat direkt från gården!*, "Buy Your Food Direct from the Farm", 1998.
13. From the brochure *God och nyttig mat odlad på ett naturligare sätt*, "Tasty and Wholesome Food Grown in a More Natural Way", Munkebäcks Gård.
14. From *Gårdsbutiksguiden Smultronställen*, published by KRAV in 1997.
15. www.hemkop.se, as of 9 November 1998.
16. An inquiry into the labelling of foodstuffs has recently been conducted; see the report *Märk väl!*, SOU 1999:7.
17. Foodstuffs or ingredients are reckoned as "new" when they have been changed at molecular level, when they are made from animals and plants not previously used for food production in the EU, or when made by production methods not normally used; the definition also includes new types of bacteria, fungi, and algae manufactured with genetically modified organisms (GMO).
18. www.europa.eu, as of 8 November 1998.
19. The scientific committees set up by the European committee with the task of assessing and pronouncing judgement on risks concerning, for example, plants, foodstuffs, or animal fodder, were reformed at the end of 1997 to attain a more independent position. The eight members of the Scientific Steering Committee appointed the members after more than a thousand scientists

had expressed an interest. These committees deal with matters such as hormones in animal fodder, genetically modified plants, and of course the consequences of BSE. The neutral position that these scientists are expected to maintain is to serve as a guarantee against accusations of protectionism, for example, when the EU wants to ban the import of hormone-treated meat from the USA. When stating reasons for such a decision, it is important to be able to cite a reliable assessment of the risks involved. That is why the Consumer Protection Directorate-General has set up a special "risk analysis group" to carry out "transparent risk analysis" by integrating risk assessment, risk management, and risk communication. The group is also to serve as an interface between research and society.

20. See Regional Cookbooks in the United States, www.foodbooks.com/regional, 23 October 1998.
21. It is also significant that the interest in non-European tastes and habits leads to goods being marketed as unspoiled and genuine, but in restaurant kitchens and on supermarket counters here they actually do not look the same as they do in Thailand, Bombay, or Mexico (cf. Burstedt 1999).
22. From the Carrefour Sydsverige newsletter of May 1998, no. 1, www.culinary-heritage.com
23. See the application for EU project funding for a pilot study, 29 May 1997, www.culinary-heritage.com
24. All quotations from the regions' self-presentation come from www.culinary-heritage.com.html, 23 October 1998.
25. It is not certain that the pictures always find the right tone, that they succeed in evoking the desired associations. A great deal of this marketing concept is based on a romantic view of the original and natural, the genuine and unaffected. An ambiguous combination of picture and text appeared on the shelves of the Swedish state alcohol monopoly, Systembolaget, in the autumn of 1998. In the series Bengt Frithiofsson Collection a wine called Primitivo was launched, after the grape with the same name. "Our Primitivo comes from 60–90-year-old vines in Pulia with roots going back to classical antiquity. From the Latin 'Primitivus', the first of its kind, original." To launch this collection, every wine was labelled with the portrait of a person working in some way with wine. The label for Primitivo showed a man with a bull-like neck, multiple chins, and tousled white hair, wearing a sleeveless vest and apron, working hard at a barrel. We read on the back label that he is a cooper. Yet for a consumer who sees the picture in combination with the big letters spelling out Primitivo, he looks like a primitive, uncivilized savage, with a touch of the Mafia. Working with cultural representations of the Other can be a tricky balancing act between seduction and alienation.

26. From the Commission's proposal for the European Community's framework programme in support of culture (2000–2004).

27. It is precisely this form of European community that has been criticized for ignoring all the people of non-European origin who are now living and working on the continent (Morley & Robins 1995; cf. Nilsson 2000). In the EU's endeavour to achieve a shared identity they search for an inner European characteristic and deny the crucial links with the surrounding world, both historical and present-day. If relations with others are recognized as identity forming, it is by negations: "non-Muslim", "non-American", etc.

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