

Broadcasting Identity: Lesbian Chefs and the Politics of Visibility

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Chapter 1: The Figure of the Lesbian Chef

This project is about mass-mediated lesbian identity and the ambiguous politics of lesbian visibility as expressed in the realm of professional cooking. In recent years, mass-media outlets such as the Food Network have turned chefs into celebrities. Central to this trend has been the rise of competitive cooking shows, like *Iron Chef America* and *Chopped*, where chefs duel with one another in pseudo-athletic settings. These outlets have made a long-standing relationship, dating back to the French creation of professional cooking, even more explicit: food, cuisine, and identity are necessarily linked. In this context, where lines between self and food are increasingly unclear, the figure of the lesbian chef is being created, represented, and circulated to an ever-expanding audience. Among the many possible expressions of queerness, these venues are selecting a few token images as exchangeable signs of lesbianism in the market.

I want to think about the tensions of lesbian mass-visibility through the concept of broadcasting – of reaching a wide, open, indeterminate, and expanding audience. Lesbian identity is being made into a normalized object – consumable by a growing queer and hetero viewing public alike – one that can reach the broadest possible audience in order to derive the greatest value for networks. Broadcasting, in which stereotyping, singularizing, normalizing and commodifying all play a part has become key to the sale of lesbian chef identity. Concerning ourselves with the broadcasted identity of the lesbian chef makes tangible both the hope of a positive mass-visibility, and the potentially harmful effects of mass-commoditization.

Visibility, as Michael Warner describes in *The Trouble With Normal*, tends to accrue to "those whose sex is least threatening, along with those whose gender profiles seem least queer are put forward as the good and acceptable face of the movement (...) Very often, but not always, it will reinforce other hierarchies of respectability--those of gender deviance, of race, of work and class, of urban geography" (Warner 1999: 67). This problem is magnified in the context of media broadcasting, where identities are normalized on a mass-scale in order to attract the attentions of a larger viewing audience. By normalizing queer identity through television producers' purportedly post-gay attitudes, and building a market-driven image of lesbian chefs, we risk eliminating the difference that has created vibrant queer community. In this context of lesbian identity production for mass-publics, what forms of ideal sexuality and gender are being manufactured? How are actual lesbian chefs confronting this and their own queerness in cooking? Amidst conditions of mass-commodified visibility, is it possible to imagine a queer counter-cuisine?

But first, to understand the conditions that have necessitated lesbian chef identity production, we must investigate the very nature of The Food Network, since it is so central to the construction of these commodified images. We must see The Food Network as more than a simple television channel; instead let us envision The Food Network as a public. While a public can be an audience of actual, numerable people perhaps in a theater, or stadium, the variety of public I believe The Food Network to be is defined by Michael Warner as one "that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation" (Warner 2005: 66). A public moreover is something that comes into being only through the attention of strangers willing to

participate in the discourse it generates. In this project's case, the figure of the lesbian chef was one created and sustained through media but made real for me when I began participating in its dialogue.

Publics are not simply conjured into being by media however. The idea that publics "exist by virtue of address" with addressees necessarily anticipated socially and politically is recognizable in the example of lesbian chef. More specifically, I argue that a lesbian chef public exists out of media consciousness of queer individuals as a lucrative target audience, but also out of real and imagined growing political support for the American gay and lesbian movement. Another caveat of Warner's public is that it be based upon active uptake and not just "ascriptive belonging" (Warner 2005: 89). Unlike "ascriptive belonging," active uptake requires audience members to participate in discourse versus merely be present for it. This definition of a public allows for the invested, active audience member to sustain, circulate or create anew the ideas and values produced by and through publics. In the case of a broadcasted lesbian chef public, creation of this public only becomes possible through addressees' participation in discussion around a given chef's lesbian identity. Seen this way, I engage in a lesbian chef public, as do the chefs I interviewed, as do the media sources I investigate. Together we recognize the lesbian chef, but also reconstitute her through discussion.

But what are the politics of a lesbian chef public, or of a queer public in general? Who are the beneficiaries of queer visibility in a mass-public? Though this question ultimately governs much of this project's analysis, interrogating the concept of broadcasting allows us to see normalization and commodification along

the way. There is a tension that exists in queer sexuality, a conditioned desire to be a “normal” part of society for all its privilege, but also a recognition that being abnormal has shaped queers' lives to the point that being normal would absolve the experiences, the "dignity in shame," that has created queer community. Importantly Warner describes how stigma "can descend on people for a lot of different reasons" (Warner 1999: 37), so while this project seems hyper-specific (a television-niche further made smaller by a queer focus), I understand this project to be meaningful for the ways it critically examines social processes that so often recreate exclusion. This project seeks to examine the ways professional cooking can become more inclusive, without absolving difference. I envision a world of professional cooking inclusive of all gender, and sexual identities. And though it does not receive its due discussion in this thesis, I hope readers will also envision a professional cuisine inclusive of all social classes.

The original vision of "the organized gay movement" as Michael Warner describes is one in which "loathing for queer sex, or gender variance" no longer negatively affects individuals' lives (Warner 1999: 39). Much of Warner's argument for how we have deviated from this original mission relies upon Michel Foucault's discussion of sex and sexuality in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*. Asserting that sex has come to be seen through the concept of sexuality, Foucault questions sex "as the anchorage point" of the deployment of sexuality. Critical to Foucault's discussion is the role sexuality has come to play in understanding one's identity.

Conflation of sex and sexuality has become social reality, one identifiable in the American gay and lesbian movement. The movement has become "a politics of

sexual identity, not sex" (Warner 1999: 40). But beyond the ways sexual identity has obfuscated sex as the movement's original mission, the American gay movement has over time created a public around the idea that this sexual identity (homosexuality) "is irrelevant to our ideals, our principles, our hopes and aspirations." (Warner 1999: 46). The idea concurrent to this public mission is that gaining acceptance through normalized appeal to the dominant culture will allow queers to escape all stigma (Warner 1999: 45-50). Normalization is essential to discussion of lesbian chef visibility precisely because it obscures consciousness of how queer visibility is being used for profit by food television and broader media forms. Normalization has steadily become the public face of the American gay movement, which Warner hopes to call critical attention towards, but more than just constituting the public face of the movement, I want to examine how normalized visions of queerness are broadcast for capitalist gain. Selling identity in professional cooking is nothing new, as I will describe through the relationship between French cookbook authors and celebrity. What is novel in this case of identity for profit is normalization of queer identity that makes this possible.

Consider the example of a recent *Buzzfeed* article "Honey Maid Had A Beautiful Response To The Hateful Comments On Its Pro-LGBT Ad." Honeymaid's March 10, 2014 debut commercial for their "This Is Wholesome" campaign presents a "day in the life" image of a variety of families including two gay males, their infant child, and older son. In the background a man's voice describes how "No matter how things change, what makes us wholesome never will. Honeymaid wholesome snacks for every wholesome family." This commercial received negative attention from

"right-wing group One Million Moms" among others as the article describes, but Honeymaid responded with a response ad in which artists rolled up print versions of the hateful comments they received in order to construct a paper sculpture spelling out the word "love." Honeymaid went further than this by also rolling up the "over ten times as many" positive responses they received and placing them around the existing "love." (Zarrell 2014)

Besides raising questions about food companies' many definitions of "wholesome snacks," the Honeymaid "This is Wholesome" campaign should receive our attention for its normalized image of queerness and its conflation of sexual identity with family, love, and ultimately selling more Honeymaid products. Dismantling this sort of advertisement might seem like dismantling positive signs of social progress, but I would argue that interrogating projects like this reveals how entrenched the politics of the American gay movement and normalization have become in market-driven mass media. Queer sexuality is certainly on display in this commercial, though its image is safely positioned in the heteronormative values of monogamy and child-rearing. But queer sex couldn't be further from the "This is Wholesome" commercial or campaign. The "This is Wholesome" campaign illustrates Foucault and Warner's point that sex and sexuality are unique constructions that have become indistinguishable in the gay movement through efforts to normalize gay and lesbian identity. Modern media understands supporting the gay movement as a road to greater profit which explains the creation and circulation of normalized images of queerness.

How might butch bodies of lesbian chefs fit into this image of normalized queerness? The answer ultimately relies upon normalizing gay and lesbian sexuality as Honeymaid does, but also on the combination of images of stereotyped lesbian chefs and the normalization of queer viewers. The latter of these means is a process I illustrate in Chapter 2 through the narrative of Chef Ria Pell, an Atlanta chef and *Chopped* contestant. Pell's narrative, like other instances of queer visibility, receives overt stereotyping. This stereotyping, I argue, is part of a broader process of the transformation of "gaydar" into capitalist technology. This monetized version of "gaydar" relies upon queers recognizing other queers; however, profit-driven networks have severely limited the recognizable images of queerness. Networks select for the images of queerness most recognizable to the largest audience of queers, and in the process violently limit our visions of queerness.

The politics of Pell's visibility relies upon normalized perception of LGBT viewers by virtue of queer audience inclusion in food television discourse. Broadcasting to LGBT viewers might have been financially risky in the past for not aligning with the dominant culture's values, for at one time the view of "One Million Moms" was the dominant ideology. However this ideology has clearly changed enough for television producers to see targeting LGBT viewers through stereotyped representation of queers as ultimately one that will pay off. This behavior can be summarized as a "post-gay attitude" and is one held by television producers who believe targeting LGBT audiences will pay off because times have changed enough for the dominant culture to accept queers through the movement's normalized appeal. Not only does the Honeymaid commercial make visible the American gay

and lesbian movement's normalized public face, it also provides capitalist incentive to further the movement's mission. Revisiting the ad's response with this in mind, we see "over ten times as many" positive responses through advertisers' and Honeymaid's eyes for the reality that normalizing queers is lucrative.

What makes the image of the lesbian chef compelling is the combination of two seemingly separate spheres: queerness and professional cooking. The performativity of both makes "lesbian chef" as a concept a specific example of the ways both chef and lesbian are created and circulated as identities. What the identity of "lesbian chef" reveals is not only the combinatory effects of sexuality, identity, and commodification, but also the social realities we create and exist in that make this combination possible.

Judith Butler describes in her book *Gender Trouble* how the historic construction of genders has been through a "heterosexist framework" that "forecloses an adequate description of the kinds of subversive and parodic convergences that characterize gay and lesbian cultures" (Butler 1999: 84). While butch bodies that constitute the stereotypical figure of the lesbian chef might appear an instance of this dissonance, instead butch lesbian bodies are furthering professional cooking's heterosexist framework of gender construction. I argue lesbian chefs are being represented and associated with male-gendered ways of being through the understanding of chef as an inherently male category. Further, I understand lesbian chefs who appear butch and are represented in male gendered ways, as being used to uphold this heterosexual framework of gender construction. By upholding this heterosexual framework, the figure of the lesbian chef is

recreating understanding of professional cooking as a male space, but also recreating dominant sex/gender ideology that understands lesbianism through butch-femme roles instead of understanding the enforcement of butch-femme roles for their value in creating "meaningful personhood," as Rubin thoughtfully explores (Rubin 2011: 253). Rubin argues these categories become useful for organizing our social lives, but cautions we must appreciate difference with the understanding that a world of singular categories will never fully encompass all types of persons. Food television's representation of lesbian chef identity is a violent limitation of not just representable queerness, but representable professional cooking. This limitation is not the result of too much difference to represent, but is rather the result of financial strategy. Moreover, the creation of these categories through food television is not done with skepticism, but is rather done through an understanding of the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality as rigidly fixed. Sex, gender and sexuality are being seen through food television in terms of universal truths with the concrete reality that currency requires. The nature of food television as a mass-public relies on a toolkit of normalization to broadcast queerness, but this normalization relies upon a heterosexist framework. Queerness, as it is both made visible and understood in audiences, is seen through normal perspective and marketed to the dominant culture for the greatest profit.

I have described the reality that lesbian chef is a figure created by food media that at present is limiting perspective on both professional chef and queerness as categories of identity. The figure of the lesbian chef relies upon broadcasting, a term I have used to encompass a mode of reaching the widest possible audience through

the violent means of stereotyping, singularizing, and normalizing. Broadcasting lesbian chef identity through The Food Network relies upon the public nature of food television, in which active audiences are allowed the possibility to engage in discussion about a chef's life and sexuality as network executives choose to represent both. In the following chapter, I will consider in more detail the conditions of media and food television that have allowed broadcasted lesbian chef identity to take shape through two distinct *Chopped* episodes and lesbian chef discourse on queer girl culture website *Autostraddle*. Next, I will describe the history of professional cooking and identity commodification through the example of nineteenth-century French chefs and cookbook authors. After discussion of past professional cooking, I will take a present turn to reflect upon my interviews with lesbian chefs to see how media broadcasting affects our discussions of chef and queerness. The final sections of this analysis will be devoted to understanding eating, like sex, to be a multi-sensory experience in which pleasure has become overloaded with meaning. I argue that a "will to knowledge" in food allows us to examine the politics of sexuality, revealing how food media's heterosexist construction of gender limits professional cooking and queer lives (Foucault 1990: 71). Instead of understanding the social, psychological and economic realities that underlie lesbian chef visibility as symptomatic of a fixed and unchangeable media, this project hopes to accomplish explorations into the processes of professionalization and commodification to gain a better understanding into how gender and sexuality are constructed and imagined alongside these processes in order to envision a different sort of mediatization through Michael Warner's idea of

a counterpublic. Indeed, it is easy to fault media for creating and sustaining limited visions of queerness based upon capitalist necessity, however media normalization possesses an unavoidable pleasure and possibility. Through this thesis, I focus on primarily the latter, arguing for a queer countercuisine and its ability to make professional cuisine a more inclusive space. I've determined that a queer countercuisine will be determined by who is in control of the sale of chef identity, who this identity is addressed to, and how the discourse of food and self is created and communicated. But not unimportant to this project is the frightening pleasure of being "normal." Normalization can make life livable and even easier, but what is lost when we decide to accept this ease?

Chapter 2: Media Images of Cooking and Queerness

In an article by "girl on girl culture" website *Autostraddle*, titled "15 Queers Cooking: Anne Burrell Joins Robust Legion of Lesbian Celebrity Chefs," food television is described as "a genre that's never lacked for lesbian representation- although queer ladies are sorely under-represented in just about every area of popular media, there's approximately two genres via which lesbians are a'plenty: shows about working out and shows about eating." A similar discussion of this phenomenon arose in a web forum, *The L Chat*. As one blogger put it: "Why are so many female chefs lesbians? It's like this awesome, unexpected pattern." These discussions governed my original thinking towards this project. I initially began this thesis with the hope of understanding whether there were more lesbian chefs working in actual kitchens than straight female chefs. I wanted to know if there was a community of lesbian chefs who could give me some singular answer to this question, as well as a reason why. While this original goal now seems like an impossible demographic study, the ability of singularized identity to drive my research and interviews reveals in part the violence of broadcasting.

I first encountered the figure of the lesbian chef while watching the Food Network, more specifically the show "Chopped." "Chopped," for the uninitiated, is a competitive cooking show that, as it describes itself, "is all about skill, speed and ingenuity" (Foodnetwork.com). The way Chopped is structured is that there are four competitors unique to each episode, three rounds (appetizer, entree, and dessert) with a basket of mystery ingredients for each. While "mystery ingredients" appear

challenging enough, chefs are also required to prepare and plate dishes in thirty minutes to a panel of judges- themselves celebrity chefs and restaurateurs. Since I began watching the show, about five years ago, I have observed Chopped's growing popularity: episodes appearing with greater frequency, more attention paid to changing themes in professional cuisine, and the appearance of existing celebrities from outside of cooking. My recognition of lesbian chefs began with the increasing frequency of specifically butch lesbian bodies featured on "Chopped." Interesting in this recognition is an understandable murkiness of what it takes for a mass-audience to identify lesbian chefs in the media. Are the iconic signs of a butch body alone enough, or do we need a contestant willing to speak about her girlfriend on camera to produce lesbian chef identity that is sellable to television viewership?

I was not unaware of the shakiness of identity when this project began. Something inherently felt strange about identifying queerness based upon symbols and cues in turn to reach any sort of conclusion about sexuality, professional cooking and media. I believed that I needed to rely upon the concept of the lesbian chef as concrete for the purposes of this project. I needed something substantial to ground my analysis in, but pushing beyond this thinking is what has allowed me to understand how media broadcasts sexuality for profit. There is safety in singularizing and labeling that makes everyday difference understandable, however this sort of thinking hinders creative ways of seeing and being in our various social worlds. More than simply limiting ways of seeing and being, broadcasting continues singularizing and labeling based upon capital. Part of this cycle involves a concept

originated by Michel Foucault and related to queer "signaling" by Jeffrey Bennett. Bennett describes the idea of "gaydar" in the following way:

Many people who identify as LGBT have learned what "cues" to look for when attempting to locate those who might share common bonds. These cues are based not so much on a static authenticity as they are on the experience of the person casting the glance and the cultural context. Butler (2004) notes the import of such dialogical evocations; people determine their sense of self only to the extent that norms exist to support and enable their identities. (Bennett 2006: 412)

Important in Bennett's discussion of gaydar and Foucault's concept of the glance as a survival tactic for queer people is suggestion that queer people are always alert to indications of other queerness, that there is a constant summing up of individuals' bodies and behaviors for what it might convey about their sexuality. How can queerness be "summed up" though? I argue that gaydar and the glance have evolved out of *perceived* necessity. Gaydar works with the expectation that indicated queerness leads to potential sexual encounter and that, moreover, a singular sexual encounter can be representative of a given person's entire sexual behavior or "sexuality." Here lies the importance of Foucault's distinction between sex and sexuality when a queer sex act is seen as indication of expected, patterned and policeable behavior. Gaydar has become a capitalist technology usable for *Chopped* and *The Food Network*, carrying with it the long-standing dominance over sex by sexuality. But perhaps of greater importance, gaydar's capitalist transformation represents a loss for queer community. When individuals are no

longer in control of the signs, behaviors, and ultimately signaling that has made life liveable and social life possible, we must weigh the positives of political power and the perilous pleasures of being normal.

To consider gaydar and broadcasting more we can examine two distinct episodes of *Chopped*. The first of these features chef Ria Pell, whose narrative introduction features her driving a black hot rod truck and searing steaks on a flat-top grill. Pell's narrative includes no overt mention of a girlfriend, but her sexuality is clearly implied through clichéd images of butch lesbian sexuality like her hot-rod and the steaks she is grilling. Pell's sexuality is communicated through these things because heterosexual framing has decreed aligned male biology with "masculine" ways of being. This framing also affects how female queerness is perceived with butch women behaving masculinity and femmes performing femininity.

Butchtastic, a blog self-described as "a potent cocktail of gender and sexuality," discusses the politics of butch stereotypes versus the myriad ways people express masculinity. In addition to assumptions about who butches are to be sexually attracted to and how they are to behave in the bedroom, blog author Kyle Jones, describes ideas communicated by these stereotypes such as: "The more you are like a man, the more butch you are," "the Butch is the man in the relationship, and therefore, takes on traditionally male roles and responsibilities," "to be masculine is to be strong, expressing femininity is weak," "butches are rough and tough and enjoy football and working on cars." We can understand Pell's stereotyped intro as harmful through Jones' discussion of her own struggles to find a masculinity that wasn't "limiting." Jones explains that the stereotypes offered up

by the media provide ideas about female masculinity and butch identity that perpetuate an often chauvinistic-style masculinity harmful to both butch women and their partners. Matthew Terrell, writing for *The Huffington Post* after Pell's death, noted that Ria was seen "as a gruff-seeming, strong-as-nails dyke, but she came from a place of kindness despite the buzz cut, piercings, and tattoos. She had perfected every detail of her midcentury mobile home palace at Sauced, and every flavor of every ingredient was brought to its delicious pinnacle in her food. Sauced was a vision in Southern done-up retro, queer, and fabulous." Terrell's remembrance of Ria provides an image of a figure who helped make real a vibrant queer community, but also someone who united all Atlantans.

In contrast to the overt stereotyping of Pell, Chopped episode 111, "Chop on Through," decidedly works to normalize queer sexuality through the narrative introduction of chef Elise Kornack. Normalization in Kornack's case relies upon images of queerness that fit safely within the dominant culture's values of monogamy and sex/gender construction. Kornack's episode begins by focusing on her intense work life as executive sous-chef at Aquavit Restaurant in New York. This focus on Kornack's work life however is balanced by her life with her girlfriend. As Kornack's voice-over describes the importance of "love" and "support" she finds necessary to working full time as a chef, viewers observe Kornack and her girlfriend holding hands and walking their dog down a New York sidewalk. Michel Foucault describes in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1* how, rather than a society of blood, our society is one of sex and sexuality. To this end, power is "addressed to sexuality" through themes of "progeny, race, the future of the species, (and) the vitality of the

social body" (Foucault 1990:147). If food television is indeed a site in which social values are conferred and "paths to good citizenship emerge," then Kornack's introduction becomes more than an attempt to emotionally connect with audience members. Rather it becomes a vehicle for conveying the values of love and support in context of a stable and ostensibly monogamous relationship (Naccarato & Lebesco 2012: 41). But looking deeper into politics behind Kornack's narrative intro, what is the effect of broadcasting normalized images of queer identity?

In *The Trouble With Normal* " Michael Warner describes how the public face of the American lesbian and gay movement is determined in mass publics that have succeeded in creating the idea that queers aspire to be normal. This normalization has come to be associated with television networks' "post-gay" ideology, a term which Julia Himberg works to unravel in the following:

On one hand, their [network executives] notions about a "post-gay" America are rooted in their own high levels of education, thorough understanding of contemporary social change, and a strong belief that television images undeniably hold the power to increase awareness and tolerance. On the other hand, extolling the virtues of "post-gay" representations highlights how removed they are from the realities of most sexual minorities, particularly sexual minorities of color, of lower economic status, and those in rural and conservative parts of the country. Arguably interviewees "post-gay" ideology runs the risk of ignoring and even perpetuating contemporary forms of homophobia and heteronormativity. (Himberg 2013:12)

While Himberg's analysis claims post-gay ideology merely risks perpetuating

homophobia and heteronormativity, I argue that post-gay ideology is an actual extension of heteronormativity. Post-gay ideology relies upon broadcasting normalized images of queerness that have been derived from a heterosexist framework. Normalized representations of queerness could not exist without heteronormativity to supply their imagination. When Kornack stresses in her narrative the importance of having the "love" and "support" a significant other provides in context with a high stress job, she speaks to values held by the dominant, heterosexual culture. Her triumphant declaration of "I wanted to make my family and girlfriend proud," like the Honeymaid "This is Wholesome" ad campaign demonstrates how far queer sex is from the gay movement's public face and present mission.

Normalized visibility of the lesbian chef has relied upon masculine stereotypes of butch lesbians, which besides being harmful for their limiting effects on individual lives and sexualities, relies upon signaling to garner LGBT viewership. Chopped episodes work to show queer viewers they are a part of Chopped's audience, but also to present themselves as progressive and modern. Appealing to an LGBT audience makes sense in this case. Chopped relies upon the idea that representing queer people will make them watch the show, which is both the goal and the network's goal- to constantly attain a wider viewership. What is unique about representation of queer people in our present mediatized era however is how the American lesbian and gay movement has created a public discourse surrounding the normalization of queer people. This public discourse has affected media representation, but also created a consciousness of queer audience members. This

discourse has not simply lived in media though. Rather, the media helps create and reflect what has been realized politically through the Defense of Marriage Act's repeal and the cascade of states that have made gay marriage legal. At work is both real and imagined normalization. This social and political climate is affecting the anticipation of queers as valuable audience members, but also their anticipated value as chef contestants.

Beyond what these two episodes of *Chopped* reveal as publics, they are made interesting for the discourse they generate in queer media spheres like the chat forum and *Autostraddle* article mentioned earlier. How should we interpret the fact that queer media outlets, which frequently appear to critique mass media representations of queerness, give a positive reception to the figure of the lesbian chef? Is this symptomatic of movement politics that have led normalized queerness to be seen as a positive thing? Or does this reflect a more complex discourse about queerness? This project's call is for the development of a queer countercuisine, and active audience that finds itself in tension with the dominant culture of the present Food Network public. Not unimportant in this exploration though is understanding the genesis of the dominant, masculinized image of professional chefs. Seen in the next chapter, professional cooking was radically altered by the creation of written culinary discourse of cookbooks. Cookbooks allowed French male chefs to create a new space and audience beyond elite households while working to make chef a profession. Thus, historical investigation into the professionalization of cuisine not only allows us to see male chefs asserting public authority, but also reveals how publics and counterpublics can emerge in cuisine.

Chapter 3: Selling Food, Selling Identity

The relationship between professional cooking and identity began with the development of chef as profession in nineteenth century France. Prior to any self-conscious mediatized era, French male chefs sought to establish themselves and their culinary authority in the public sphere by authoring cookbooks and broadcasting an image of the chef as a profession. Thus, current discourse about the changing nature of professional cooking, or the rise of the celebrity chef, can be read as an intensification of the long-standing relationship between professional cooking and identity. Broadcasted chef identity preceded food television, but has also been recreated through involvement of television executives and television's visual nature.

The development of French cuisine began during the final century and a half of the ancien régime in French court society, but rapidly changed after the revolution due in part to cookbooks, restaurants, and the public sphere. But prior to these changes, which we can consider the professionalization of chefs, haute cuisine was essentially self-expression of upper class elites less interested in government and more in society. Prior to the nineteenth century, chef de cuisines only worked for wealthy patrons and noble households. Aside from their patrons' tastes, chefs subscribed to rules put in place by culinary trade guilds, whose system of apprenticeship was the main source of culinary education.

After the Revolution, the dominant force that shaped professional cuisine was the Napoleonic emphasis placed on raising the status of medical professionals

and scientists. Referred to as Idéologues, these individuals' efforts to improve health and further research were supported with political power. Integral to improving health were efforts to improve knowledge of preparation and preservation of food with the French military in mind. To this end, French chefs invariably benefitted (Davis 2013: 143). What resulted from this process was the establishment of a relationship between culinary trade and scientific inquiry. Jennifer Davis describes how this new union of scientific knowledge with artisanal expertise served to limit women's opportunity in the culinary trade:

"Trade alliances with institutions of scientific inquiry benefited from the processes of gendering science as a masculine pursuit. In 1803 legislation explicitly excluded women from access to scientific education and the practice of medicine. The association of cooks with the language and institutions of science thus provided a new cultural means of distinguishing between men's and women's work that eventually excluded women from important sites of culinary production" (Davis 2013:143).

In addition to describing the relationship between science and cooking, Davis' *Defining Culinary Authority* provides a gendered look into the relationship between chefs and cookbooks by relying upon Habermas' original idea of the public sphere in order to create her own culinary-specific one. The theoretical basis for Warner's public, Habermas' public sphere is described as any space free from state authority, emerging "in the seventeenth century as the concerns of the commercial class increasingly clashed with those of the absolutist state. Private individuals of various

social ranks came together as equals away from the influence of state authority to engage questions of common interest in new print forums and new sites of sociable exchange" (Davis 2013: 67). Davis figures into discussion of the original idea of the public sphere two criticisms important for our analysis. The first of these is Joan Landes' critique that, rather than the idealistic, inclusive vision of Habermas, the public sphere built itself upon the exclusion of women. Landes' critique has certainly been debated, but an almost exclusively male body of French cookbook authors proves compelling .

The second of Davis' critiques of Habermas' public sphere invokes an article by Colin Jones that describes how commercialization, rather than being "a sign of the decline of the public sphere with the advent of mass society" instead "characterized bourgeois public discourse and sociability very early on" (Davis 2013: 68). Critiques of Habermas alongside Davis reveal a culinary public sphere that has existed since the eighteenth century and has been gendered and commercial since its beginning. Alongside this relationship between male chefs, cookbooks and the public market, writing cookbooks also asserted maleness with culinary expertise. This association affected perceptions of elite and non-elite cooking, dividing the two based upon gender. But more than simply dividing elite and non-elite cooking upon gender, cookbooks broadcast the gendered identity of professional chef to a wider, public sphere of consumers.

A figure central to the history of sellable chef identity is Marie-Antoine Carême. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson describes the career of Carême, "the first celebrity chef," revealing the reason why and the means through which Carême

achieved such celebrity status by framing part of her discussion through post-revolutionary France's changing market place: one rapidly expanding, modern, and urbanizing (Ferguson 2003). Ferguson elaborates on her account of this changing marketplace by describing its effect on Carême's career, and more specifically, how Carême became convinced that greater value lay, not in cooking for the relatively few and extraordinary wealthy, but rather in writing cookbooks for the "more inclusive bourgeois public." (Ferguson 2003: 40) If a marketplace already existed for a culinary public sphere to develop almost a century earlier, why might Carême be perceived as the first celebrity chef? The answer lies in a combination of the process of cookbook authorship and the social and political climate of post-revolutionary France. Davis points out how post-revolutionary nationalism in France affected perception of culinary discourse. French cuisine became a nationalistic effort, with Carême combining professional cooking, the public sphere, and identity with French nationalism. Carême broadcast himself as chefs before him had done, but emerged as a celebrity as a result of French cuisine's post-revolutionary association with French nationalism.

Peter Naccarato and Kathleen Lebesco write in their book *Culinary Capital* how present day competitive cooking shows like Chopped and Iron Chef arrived out of the Food Network's desire to attract a male audience. The means through which this audience was attainable, Naccarato and Lebesco describe as "overt masculinization" and "counter constructions of cooking as nurturing, democratic and family-centered labor" (Naccarto & Lebesco 2012: 45). Absent in *Culinary Capital's* discussion of competitive cooking shows is the relationship between

professional cooking, the public sphere, and masculinity, however. Rather, this analysis utilizes the idea of a passive audience, which William Mazzarella critiques in his article, "Culture, Globalization, Mediation" through the following: "In the culture industries, it helps to maintain the fiction that media and marketing are merely 'responding' to the already-constituted desires of audiences- even as many decisions are actually made on a hunch basis by a surprisingly small group of people worldwide " (Mazzarella 2004: 354). Rather than merely responding to a given audience's desires, masculine tropes in competitive cooking shows are an example of how masculinity is produced and reproduced through food media. Professional cooking and a masculine public sphere arose concurrently and relied on each other. This history is what constitutes "the overt masculinization" Naccarato and Lebesco describe in their book.

Naccarato and Lebesco claim the overt masculinization of television shows is not just simply to garner a male audience though. The two describe competitive cooking as symptomatic of a broader effort by television to "defend masculinity from the queering of American popular culture" (Naccarato & Lebesco 2012: 46). Following this thinking, both Naccarato and Lebesco rely upon Rebecca Swenson's observations that cooking is something that protects masculinity to such an extent that female chefs are made to perform "female masculinity" (Naccarato & Lebesco 2012: 47). Seen this way, professional cooking is merely a neutral vehicle, malleable in the ways it is broadcast and performed, examined neither for how it reifies masculinity, nor how masculinity reifies it. Media-sensitive scholarship that examines the social alongside cooking has only now become conscious of

masculinity's relation to professional cooking. Naccarato and Lebesco seem to understand the arrival of competitive cooking shows as attempts to reach male audiences- that cooking is necessarily being made masculine for male viewers. While it is interesting to consider which images of masculinity these competitive cooking shows are selecting and circulating, focus on making cooking masculine assumes a former absence of gender in cooking, or its prior femininity. What we know however from the arrival of cookbooks in eighteenth century France is that professional cooking has always been perceived as a masculine endeavor.

Naccarato and Lebesco seem to assert that the motive behind competitive cooking shows is simultaneously innovative on the part of television executives while also reflecting the deeply rooted social value of hegemonic masculinity. These two observations fail however to take into account how the image of professional cooking has historically been masculine, but also how hegemonic masculinity is constantly made and re-made through various forms of media. Taken together, competitive cooking shows are relying upon the existing relationship between professional cooking, masculinity, and the public sphere, but also are creating new ideas of this relationship. Understanding this relationship is instrumental for viewing media as both a neutral tool and a site of self-recognition (Mazzarella 2004). This duality is at once constraining and liberating, but understanding how media relies upon existing social ideas but also creates them, is instrumental to seeing its potential.

If we understand media as a tool for conveying social values, but also one creating those values, what might the image of the lesbian chef on competitive

cooking shows assert? Michael Warner describes in his book *The Trouble With Normal* how the lesbian and gay movement has come to be, in the last twenty years, one "dominated by a small group of national organizations, an equally small group of media celebrities, connected to a network of big-money politics that revolves around publicity consultants and campaign professionals and litigators" (Warner 1999: 67). Resulting from this change, the fate of the movement has now come to rest in mass-mediated publics. The present perception of the American lesbian and gay movement is that publicity is good, that visibility is good. We must examine this idea of "mass-mediated publics," and what the ramifications of going public with queer identity might be. But before this, we need to understand the motivation behind the American gay and lesbian movement's desire to be visible to mass-publics.

Like the need for chefs to assert their authority and make cooking into a profession through appeal to a wider public, the American gay movement has similarly adjusted itself to the dominant culture and mass media. The movement has made significant political traction by relying upon broadcasted queer sexuality palatable to a society built on heterosexual gender construction. Beyond reinforcing heteronormative values however, the gay movement has unintentionally created a hierarchy of queer individuals with those who experience the least stigma at the top. The gay rights movement and the effort to professionalize cooking have both relied upon publicness. Publicness in turn has allowed for broadcasting to occur under the rationale that visibility is good. The need to broadcast chef identity and the belief that queer visibility is inherently good has left us doubly-blinded when it comes to

lesbian chef visibility. We do not question the politics of lesbian chef visibility because chef culture has always necessarily involved public appeal. Similarly, the gay and lesbian movement in America at present maintains the attitude that visibility is good, that appearing like a normal member of society will free us from the stigma we internalize and anticipate.

Chapter 4: Conversations With Lesbian Chefs

I interpreted the combination of lesbian visibility and professional cooking on *Chopped* as an indication that more lesbians were cooking professionally than straight women. Thus, my interviews with lesbian chefs grew out of an interest in determining emerging realities of lesbian chef experience. Within one conversation with Chef Lo and several with Chef Miller, I explored the media attention on lesbian chefs as symptomatic of their disproportionate presence in the industry. What has emerged then in my interviews are descriptions of these women navigating the idea that there are more lesbian chefs. More than this, these chefs try to explain and understand their career successes through the idea that the restaurant kitchen is a domain of masculinity. These interviews are revealing for how both of these chefs confront cooking and queerness. We spoke of their experiences as lesbian chefs to explain the phenomenon of *the* lesbian chef.

After I described my interest in the lives of lesbian chefs, a friend and fellow Tufts student suggested getting in touch with a former basketball teammate and alum named Vanessa Miller. Miller began cooking during the end of her senior year at Tufts and has since gone on to help open two restaurants. Now three and a half years out of Tufts, she has successfully worked her way from front of the house to executive chef. Together, we relied upon media and Miller's experiences as evidence for why lesbians might be more successful as professional chefs than straight women. I had read enough Anthony Bourdain and enough "why are there

no female chef articles" to understand the restaurant kitchen to be an ostensibly masculine domain, where patriarchal attitudes of French chefs have carried into the present. I, like many others, assumed the restaurant kitchen to be a sphere of straight male ego and sexual bravado, a phenomenon Miller didn't dismiss. More specifically, she portrayed the professional kitchen as one that possesses a unique degree of sexual vernacular: *"99% of the things that are said and done back in the kitchen, you would get fired for sexual harassment in any other job" [...] "it takes a really specific kind of person, and an even more specific kind of woman to be able to function, enjoy functioning, and excel in those atmospheres" [...] "I have a lot of thoughts on why maybe lesbians tend to be better at it, or want to do it more. I don't think it has anything necessarily to do with skill as a cook more like in terms of ability to exist in that environment."* Strengthening her argument that the restaurant kitchen possesses an atmosphere that lesbians, as opposed to straight women, might be better suited to work in, she added, *"I don't think I have a better palate than 90% of straight people, but I think I can function better in a restaurant kitchen than 90% of straight people, and that's half the battle."*

When I questioned whether Chef Miller had ever experienced discrimination based upon her sexual orientation, she appeared adamant that any discrimination in the restaurant kitchen she had experienced *"wasn't because I was a twenty five year old lesbian telling this forty year old man what to do, it was because I was this twenty five year old little girl telling this man what to do."* Miller prefaced this by saying, *"I don't think it has to do with sexuality"* and *"guys feel better able to hang with you if you can identify with them in that way."* This idea that lesbian sexuality, instead of

being something for which one can be discriminated against, is instead a means of being able to "hang" in the restaurant kitchen was something she and I discussed more in depth for the various ways it appears in the restaurant kitchen: everything from *"So did you get laid last night or what?"* to *"Chef are you ever with a girl, and has this happened?"* to more purposed sexual discourse: *"it can be hard to find ways to put guys on their asses, so when you can offend a man's sexuality [...] you know it's a good way to put people in their place. "You tell a man you get more action than he does and he's going to shut the fuck up"* seemed suggestive at the time that lesbians, more than heterosexual women, possess the ability to share in straight male sexual discourse that is an unavoidable element of the professional kitchen environment. I believed then that based upon this ability, lesbian chefs constituted a large percentage of female chefs.

Of all the interview requests I sent to female, openly gay, celebrity chefs, I was the most surprised to hear back from Chef Anita Lo. Lo has appeared on shows like "Iron Chef America," "Chopped," and "Top Chef." In addition to these appearances and multiple interviews, Lo is the chef and owner of Annisa in New York City, which received three stars from *The New York Times*. So, when she agreed to sit down with me, I had to do my best to subdue feelings of nervousness based upon not only Chef Lo's celebrity, but also her association with the culinary elite based upon her restaurant and relationships with well-known chefs like April Bloomfield and David Bouley. Before service one Tuesday afternoon, I spoke with Chef Lo at her restaurant about whether she believed there to be a high incidence of lesbian chefs, as Chef Miller and I had previously discussed:

AL: "Absolutely, yeah like a much higher number or especially at the top, than 10 percent and in New York, well actually all over the place it's kind of really bizarre. It's an interesting phenomenon."

BB: "I wasn't sure if it [lesbians constituting a large number of female chefs] was the case or the media represents it that way..."

AL: "I think it's absolutely the case. You know even years back I was pretty active in a group called Women Chefs and Restaurateurs. I don't know, it was the culinary Dinah Shore weekend. It was just funny- we'd talk about it. It wasn't exclusive by any means."

My thinking at the time of our interview was that lesbians were better able to participate in the sexual banter of the restaurant kitchen, which was why they constituted a large number of female chefs. However, while Chef Lo agreed that *"oh yeah, there's a lot of sexual banter in the kitchen,"* the reasoning she gave for the idea that lesbians appear more frequently in the restaurant kitchen, and frequently in the top positions, was intriguing and different: namely, that lesbians were less restricted by gender norms that required remaining home and raising children.

Conversation about sexuality, and the ease with which lesbian chefs are able to approach the subject, might be attributed to Chef Lo's ideas about visibility, which she and I discussed in the context of being open in the restaurant kitchen and the visibility competitive cooking shows present for queers:

AL: "Oh yeah, of course. Yeah you have to because otherwise you know then you always you have to deal with the gay jokes. That's awful. I feel it's really important to be out

about it. I think visibility [...] I think it's important politically but also for my own sake. Take that strong stance [...] people make gay jokes all the time even people who think they're p.c. I want to make sure that you know that if you're in my presence, I'm going to call you on it."

BB: "Do you think shows like Top Chef etc are working towards greater gender equality in the kitchen, or less gay joking in the kitchen?"

AL: "I don't know in the kitchen, but hopefully overall [...] it's always good to have visibility. Hopefully if younger kids see people that are out and okay with it, they're going to have an easier time coming out and then it'll be more the norm, which I think is happening now anyway."

Chef Lo added to the explanation for the seemingly high number of lesbian chefs in professional cooking, ultimately broadening the discussion to discussion of gender norms and stereotypes:

AL: "The other interesting part of this question is that of female chefs. The proportion [of] lesbians is much higher than the average community but where are the gay men in this industry. That also speaks to societal myths about who lesbians are supposed to be and who gay men are supposed to be. You know this is a very macho industry, I think we all hold these social constructions in our head and they all need to be addressed."

Chef Lo and I began circling this idea of social construction for its totalizing effects on identity. We shared a mutual understanding of "lesbian" as organizing concept of

female queerness, but a simultaneous frustration with how the term limits opinions and behaviors of the multitude of queer women *who may be professional chefs*.

Throughout my interview with Chef Lo, we both came upon contradictory ideas that seem pervasive in discussion of the interconnectivity of food-gender-sexuality. Perhaps the first of these arose in our discussion of whether a queer sensibility could affect cooking or whether potential for a lesbian cuisine exists:

BB: "Do you think cooking as an activity or a craft can have a queer sensibility? Do you think there could be a lesbian specific cuisine?"

AL: "No, not at all and I hate that question: do women cook any different than men [...] like oh yes, like women cook for love and men cook for glory. If we do it's because we've been raised to do so, and that's also a social construction but I think we need to try to get away from that [...] it's food. I don't think it has anything to do with what I do in bed."

BB: "Do you think sexuality can be communicable through food? How about queer culture?"

AL: "Food is influenced by culture certainly. It's from traditions. The group of gays. We don't have a food culture, so no I don't think that's possible, and if we do it's a really horrible one. Back in the day, [a lesbian bar] tried to make food and god was that terrible. I mean it's all a stereotype as well. I mean you go to those parties and how many vegetarian things y'know."

BB: "Quinoa for me just seems something that.."

AL: "really gay [both laugh] That part of that culture is unfortunate."

Sexual camaraderie and gendered associations of cooking or domestic arrangements are not unimportant in discussion of the restaurant kitchen. These topics clearly are significant to both Vanessa Miller and Anita Lo, but in analyzing the phenomenon of lesbian chefs, these topics distract from the very force that generated my conversation with both chefs: the media's creation of the idea of lesbian chef. My conversations with Vanessa Miller and Anita Lo are compelling for how these successful chefs perform media representations of celebrity chef, educated chef, and lesbian chef. Not unimportant in discussion is the idea that the restaurant kitchen is still a masculine domain, or that visibility of queer people is a good thing. These conversations, above all else, reveal the way I reflected the media imagined lesbian chef. Further, in conjunction with two queer female chefs, actual people made media discourse of the lesbian chef real. These chefs are not navigating the demands of gendered inequality in the professional kitchen, rather they are navigating broadcasted identity and creating a lesbian chef public.

Chapter 5: Professional Cooking, Gender Construction, and Queer Cuisine

Exploring "the televised treatments of femininity, masculinity, and food," Rebecca Swenson writes that the public sphere's perception of chef as a male profession arrived in the U.S. through the attitudes of French male chefs and the development of haute cuisine. Swenson doesn't simply focus on French chefs as the reason for the gendered division of cooking. Rather she describes how "visions of masculinity within American culture are always relational and exist only by depending on an 'other' -in this case femininity. (Swenson 2009: 40). At article's end, Swenson considers how a possible shifting labor dynamic in the home might lead to new definitions of masculinity and femininity, but also to changing gendered ideas of public and private. But more than Swenson's suggestion that we change household responsibilities, gender's performative nature enhances our understanding of queerness in the professional kitchen.

Through the broadcasted figure of the lesbian chef, normalization of queer identity and recreation of the trope that "chef" is a male-gendered category, food television is creating genders that fall in line with compulsory heterosexuality. Utilizing lesbian chefs to simultaneously garner LGBT viewers and appeal to broader society's shifting queer-friendly political sphere is only one facet of lesbian chef visibility, however, for the selective use of butch lesbian chef bodies constitutes another: hegemonic masculinity in professional cooking and the understanding that female same sex sexuality necessarily involves maleness somehow.

How are lesbian chefs created and perceived through food media as performing in male-gendered ways? Returning to Jennifer Davis, *Redefining Culinary*

Authority describes how "elite male cooks and cookbooks sought to lay claim to the aesthetic ideal of the natural by redefining culinary skill in terms of natural laws, scientific knowledge, and the public good. This contested the definition of the natural as either simple or scientific proved powerful in reorganizing culinary labor along gendered lines in nineteenth century France" (Davis 2013: 34). Not only does this description reveal how culinary discourse was linked with scientific and masculine discourse by nineteenth century French chefs, but also how professional cooking has never been gender-neutral, instead always carrying with it notions of masculinity and the social conception that chef is default male.

Charlotte Druckman's *Gastronomica* article, entitled "Why Are There No Great Women Chefs" works to take apart the discussion surrounding female chefs through discourse relating to the semantics of gender and cooking e.g. male:chef, female:cook, as well as "cultural tropes." Druckman describes the prevalent idea that "'Women cook with the heart, men cook with the head—because women have hearts and men have brains.' So, if a male chef serves a plate of Spaghetti Bolognese, it is lauded for its 'in-your-face,' 'rich,' 'intense,' 'bold' flavors, while a woman's plateful of the same food indicates 'homey,' 'comforting' fare, 'prepared with love.' The former becomes an aggressive statement, a declaration of ego, while the latter is a testament to home cooking" (Druckman 2010: 25-26).

Druckman works to reveal these associations as quite simply prejudices, through description of a six course meal and panel discussion entitled "Gender Confusion: Unraveling the Myths of Gender in the Restaurant Kitchen." While Druckman clearly has an agenda behind describing panelists' difficulty discerning

the gender of the person responsible for preparing each dish, she ultimately trivializes the importance of the symbolic quality of food which is problematic for edging us toward the conclusion that discussion of gender is irrelevant in professional cuisine. Merging our interest in queerness and gender construction, Butler describes "the disciplinary production of gender effects a false stabilization of gender in the interests of the heterosexual construction and regulation of sexuality within the reproductive domain." (Butler 1999: 172-173) Further, she describes how "the construction of coherence conceals the gender discontinuities that run rampant within heterosexual, bisexual, and gay and lesbian contexts in which gender does not necessarily follow from sex, and desire, or sexuality generally, does not seem to follow from gender- indeed, where none of these dimensions of significant corporeality express or reflect one another" (Butler 1999: 172-173). What is at issue then when the identity of lesbian chef is broadcast is that it is only imagined through this heterosexual framework of gender construction.

Rather than equating gender with cultural construction and sex with nature, Butler says gender is "the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive,' prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts" (Butler 1999: 11). Druckman suggests we write off gender in discussion of food and cooking, but gender and food both act as lenses through which we understand a given individual's identity. Eliminating discussion of gender as it pertains to food or vice versa represents a lost opportunity to critically examine "the latent text of the body politic" (Butler 1999: 172). Instead of denying food and cooking as a means of imagining gender or

sexuality, we should instead examine how the category of chef has come to rely upon the image of male sex/male gender/heterosexuality. Further, we must critically question how this image of professional cooking has come to dominate culinary discourse in media.

Druckman elaborates on her initial question-"why are there no great women chefs?"-by considering the necessary commerciality of professional cooking, describing how "In the United States especially, success, for chefs, has historically been measured more by business acumen, celebrity, and marketability rather than by what happens at the stove"(Druckman 2010: 26). This is compelling given the French history of chef as evolving in the public sphere, but if celebrity and marketability are essential to being a professional chef then why don't we consider Rachel Ray or Giada DeLaurentis under this term? Druckman argues the reason for this is how food television portrays women "cooks, not chefs; as pretty faces who do easy meals for families or casual parties" (Druckman 2010: 28). Besides the v-neck shirt-wearing daytime cooks though, Druckman describes women who participate in competitive cooking shows and female chefs in general as "unfeminine, short-haired, and makeup free, often quite muscular, even manly, in appearance. It's as though the only way to gain legitimacy as a food force is by hiding all traces of femininity" (Druckman 2010: 29). Could Druckman be describing the figure of the lesbian chef? Why might Druckman jump to efforts to hide femininity in food rather than highlight the presence of butch lesbians? Explanation for this returns to Butler's point that the construction of gender is through a heterosexual framework.

Seen here, Druckman understands gender as necessarily corresponding with sex, instead of interpreting male gendered ways of being that imply queerness.

Of further interest in Druckman's discussion of female chefs is the section she entitles "Kitchen Culture: In the Trenches." In this section Druckman describes the restaurant kitchen in familiar terms: "hierarchical," "psychologically challenging and mentally grueling," a space of "hazing" and one "harder on females" (Druckman 2010: 30). Druckman's argument critiques the means through which media enforces the idea that no women can be great chefs, yet uses a similar approach while exploring restaurant kitchen culture. At once Druckman asserts that media begging of the female chef question enhances our perception that no great female chefs exist, yet she simultaneously enforces the stereotype that restaurant kitchens are inhospitable work environments for women. But more than presenting the single image of restaurant kitchen as a male space, Druckman also presents a one-dimensional view of the American restaurant kitchen- in particular, the idea that any "serious" restaurant kitchen relies on a French ancestry and military system of hierarchy.

Julia Moskin's January 2014 article in *the New York Times*, entitled "A Change in the Kitchen," describes a different American professional kitchen culture than the macho, French-focused one: "High-end restaurants, which like others have historically lagged in providing health insurance, paid vacations and competitive wages for their employees, are becoming more corporate and professional; even a T-shirt-wearing, cheerfully profane chef like David Chang has a human resources team and offers paid maternity leave. An exploding food industry has created many

new entry points for women, who once were largely limited to the 'pink ghetto' of the pastry chef; that part of the business alone has grown so much in prestige and profitability that opportunities there have snowballed. And women themselves are pushing for the jobs, conditions and recognition they want" (Moskin 2014).

Moskin's article works to effectively portray the American restaurant kitchen as one that is becoming more welcome to women, something she accomplishes through a broader effort to explore professional cooking less as a craft and more as a profession. In support of this professionalization, Moskin brings in discussion of The Toklas Society, self-described "network for women in the hospitality industry" as evidence that educated women are now, more than ever, considering *careers* in food. Similarly, we see these changes in the arrival of *Cherry Bombe*, a biannual food publication that "celebrates women and food—those who grow it, make it, serve it, style it, enjoy it and everything in between" (cherrybombe 2014). In context with food science's seeming masculinity, style as a recognizable component of a food magazine that specifically targets women is interesting to consider.

There is a tangible frustration among female chefs when confronted with questions related to gender, a feeling attributable to the obfuscatory effect its discussion has appeared to have on female chef success and seen in my interview with Anita Lo as well as Moskin's article. Presently, it seems commonplace for female chefs to try to disassociate their gender from cooking, to possess the attitude of "the fact that I'm a woman has nothing to do with how I cook." But is disassociation from gender the means to gender equality in the restaurant kitchen? Do we work to dissolve any association of gender with cooking in order to solve the

problem? Is it even possible to remove gender from cooking, and what effect might that possibility have on other identities we possess? Gender has proved a powerful force in shaping ideas about who can cook professionally, but professional cooking has also helped shape ideas about gender. We construct ideas of chefs based upon the existing attitude that chefs necessarily must be male, but we also require them to perform in male-gendered ways through their bodies, behaviors *and food*. The perception that there are less successful female chefs requires we speak of the relationship between food and gender, critically, for explanation as to why male-gendered performances are privileged. Similarly, we must combat knee-jerk positive reception of queer visibility through the image of the lesbian chef if for nothing else than its creation through heterosexist gender construction.

Antje Lindenmeyer's *Lesbian Appetites: Food, Sexuality and Community in Feminist Autobiography*" and Julia C. Ehrhardt's "Towards Queering Food Studies: Foodways, Heteronormativity, and Hungry Women in Chicana Lesbian Writing" portray the significance of food in representing sexual identity, stressing the "emotional and political significance of food" as it relates to sexuality. Ehrhardt even describes "queering food studies" as a means of resisting "heterosexual gender ideologies" (Ehrhardt 2006: 91). But more than simply representing identity, food is used to continually construct identity. Lindenmeyer examines Chicana lesbian poetry and literature, whereas Ehrhardt considers lesbian autobiographical writing, both however invoke concepts of queer sexuality to destabilize heteronormative understandings of gender and food associations. Returning to Butler's discussion of gender and compulsory heterosexuality, what would a world in which identity was

constructed through food in a queer way look like? If gender and sex become scrambled in a queer world, revealing "the heterosexual [model] of coherence" as fiction, couldn't *anyone* cook?

By this point, you might be wondering why food centers at this discussion of queer politics. Perhaps more than any of the relationships this work has previously investigated, food and sex are explicitly linked. In 'Lesbian Appetites' Antje Lindenmeyer points to widespread recognition of this relationship through clichéd examples of food as sex. Lindenmeyer describes:

"The use of fruit imagery to signify sexuality is widespread– the suggestive shapes and textures of fruit lend themselves very easily to this. On the other hand, there is a persistent association of fruit and the 'fruity' with queer sexuality. Another obvious connection is that between fruit and woman-as-prey, passive and ready to be plucked" (Lindenmeyer 2006: 471).

Lindenmeyer situates much of her discussion of food's importance in lesbian autobiographical writing by relying upon Elspeth Probyn's "Deleuzian view of the body" and her queer theory-informed observations of food and sex (Lindenmeyer 2006: 472). Lindenmeyer's attention to the way Probyn views "eating and sex as multisensual experiences that call these [stable, bodily or sexual] identities into question" is valuable for revealing the potential for and the value of a queer cuisine. Food is symbolic, serving as shorthand for everything ranging from childhood experience to political identity. Importantly, food is also a sensual experience.

Both Lindenmeyer and Probyn reveal eating, like sex, to be an experience of pleasure that has become overloaded with meaning. In relation to sex and sexuality,

Foucault describes how we have invented "pleasure in the truth of pleasure" (Foucault 1990: 71). Beyond this derivation of truth from pleasure, Foucault implores us to consider "the positive mechanisms" of this search for truth, to consider the discourses we create around pleasure in order to create our identities. I believe food to be a unique lens through which we can examine the politics of sexuality because of this shared pleasure between eating and sex. Rather, I argue that more than food's symbolic potential or aesthetic qualities, the sensuality of eating generates a "will to knowledge" in food. The resulting discourse of this search highlights food's overloaded meaning, but also makes legitimate potential for investigations into the politics of sexuality through food. This chapter explores this search for truth through food and eating, which I rely upon to imagine a combined will to knowledge of food and sexuality by envisioning a queer countercuisine.

Writing about chef-created food journal, *Lucky Peach's* eighth and gender-specific issue, L.V. Anderson explores media enforcement of gendered stereotypes and binary-thinking. Though Anderson begins by considering the magazine's dual covers, and reversed binding that necessitates flipping the magazine in order to go from one section to the other for the ways it enforces food-gender stereotypes, she later considers the magazine's ambiguity for what readers might take away from the issue:

"It's not that there's no logic whatsoever to the division: There are profiles of female chefs in the women's section and of male chefs in the men's. The protagonist of the short story in the women's section is a teenage girl; the protagonist of the short story

in the men's section is a man. Investigations into strictly gendered professions—the female divers in Korea, all-male Chinese food delivery guys in San Francisco—appear in the section you'd expect. Still, the placement of articles is haphazard enough to make the editor in me crave a clearer explanation of the distinction between the two sections. But the feminist in me likes the chaos of the gender issue. Perhaps it would have been even better to dispense with the divisions entirely and let the melons and butternut squash mingle on the same page" (Anderson 201).

But one of the articles in the issue of *Lucky Peach* that Anderson is decidedly ambivalent toward is John Birdsall's "America Your Food Is So Gay." The piece contains Birdsall's experiences trying to understand whether there is "a gay sensibility" in food and cooking. Birdsall never directly answers the question but writes "If there was a gay sensibility, you could find it on the cold line when I was cooking, where every plate I put up had a fierce edge born of imposed isolation. The fish stews coming off José's sauté station might have been technically perfect, but they were also mechanical. My *salades composées* were thickets of yearning, drifts of leaves and flowers, sprigs of herbs and tiny carrots that looked like they had been blown there by some mighty force of nature. I was fueled by sublimated rage, the outsider with something to prove, taking the ingredients I was handed and making sure they transcended their limits" (Birdsall 2013).

The title of Birdsall's piece, "America, Your Food Is So Gay," describes his point that queer food writers and chefs are responsible for the development of American cuisine, but also utilizes the "gay" in the linguistically familiar deprecating

way. Use of the word "gay" as synonymous to "ridiculous" or "stupid" has become an everyday confrontation with movement politics with regard to whether one uses or combats use of the word gay in this sense. The context of this use or contention over it can generally signal a person's opinion towards gay rights. In Birdsall's case however, a queer perspective allows him to take the negative linguistic association with "gay" and combine it with American culinary pride, by simultaneously calling attention to the subordinate status of queers while highlighting their influence in American food culture. The attention Birdsall pays to the subordinate status of queers in the context of professional cooking and cuisine is the sort of mode, the queer counterpublic, I envision as necessary for advancing a more inclusive vision of American cuisine.

When I asked Anita Lo whether she thought that the visibility of lesbian chefs was helping to work towards greater gender equality in the kitchen, or less gay joking in the kitchen, she responded with her previously quoted statement about hoping more openly gay contestants on competitive cooking shows would make it easier for young people to come out. Lo's conclusion about visibility represents an undeniable element of visibility that makes its politics indeed ambiguous. My first exposures to queerness were those that had been created and circulated by the media. Rife with all of the expected stereotypes, they nonetheless allowed me to consider the possibility of queerness within my own life. I found what Warner describes as "a dignity in shame" through media. Understanding queerness as the media broadcasts it however carries with it seemingly fixed ways of understanding

gender and sex that are difficult to consciously realize you've absorbed until you see or make attempts to undo them.

For years, I possessed my own ideas of how I needed to look and behave based upon my sexuality. I realized that restraining femininity communicated availability to a queer girl's gaze and so I allowed sexuality to govern how I practiced gender, which in turn created a combination of biological, gender and sexuality ambivalence. I've come to gradually realize the times and ways I want to perform in both male-gendered and female-gendered ways, accepting that there are days I want to appear female, behave in feminine ways, and appear straight. Above all, I learned that the frequency of these does not restrict sexual experience or how I live my life. Observing disproportionate media attention to lesbian chefs along with my own nascent interest in becoming a chef served to attract my interest again towards sexuality, but also meant envisioning future meaningful personhood through the identity of lesbian chef. Concurrent to this project, I set out to "stage" or intern in restaurant kitchens as a means of realizing my own interest in cooking as real or imagined. However, what I have come to understand through my time in restaurant kitchens has been more about my self and individual abilities than any monolithic work environment. Similarly, what I have observed from the chefs with whom I've worked is conscious individuality. A given chef's unique prep work, station, and plating exceed emphasis on any team, as teamwork in the case of a restaurant kitchen could be summarized as an individual cook's ability to have completed his or her prep list well before dinner service. But beyond my singular experience and personal significance, this project helps us envision a more inclusive

version of professional cooking, where chefs, gender, and sexuality are no longer understood as fixed categories built upon a heteronormative social framework. The thesis has pushed me to question how we can transition from a heteronormative framework to a more pliable, queer framework of professional cuisine.

Returning to Michael Warner's *Publics and Counterpublics*, but focusing instead on counterpublics, what would a queer counterpublic in professional cuisine look like? Visible in John Birdsall's piece is a counterpublic's necessary "awareness of its subordinate status" and requirement that counterpublics exist in relation to the "background set of conditions" of the public from which they are derived (Warner 2005: 56). Existing by virtue of publics, but necessarily in tension with them, counterpublics generate discourse and opinion outside of authority. A counterpublic's value exists in the possibility it allows for outside of the public from which it has been created. Seen through the following, this possibility affects social change ranging from broad society to personal life:

"A public, or counterpublic, can do more than represent the interests of gendered or sexualized persons in a public sphere. It can mediate the most private and intimate meanings of gender and sexuality. It can work to elaborate new worlds of culture and social relations in which gender and sexuality can be lived, including forms of intimate association, vocabularies of affect, styles of embodiment, erotic practices, and relations of care and pedagogy" (Warner 2005: 57).

Working backwards from all of the complexities of a broadcast food television public, a queer cuisine would involve a necessary understanding of its own subordination to the current discourse created and sustained through food media. This would firstly entail the professional kitchen as no longer a space defined by masculinity, in which media consciousness of female chefs would not exist simply as the perceived opposite of our culture's male defined category of professional chef. Similarly, lesbian chefs would not be conflated with this male chef category. Butler describes how "'intelligible' genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire" (Butler 1999: 23). Recalling then her discussion of heterosexist framework for obscuring "the kinds of subversive and parodic convergences that characterize gay and lesbian cultures" (cite) we can anticipate queered understandings of sex and gender in professional cooking to broaden perceptions of the professional chef.

Queering our perspective on professional cooking seems a way forward in making professional cooking a more inclusive space, but the existing relationship between professional chef and identity commodification, the American lesbian and gay movement's insistence on normalization and visibility, and the food media's desire to create and sustain identities with only profit in mind seem to obstruct this effort. The question then becomes to what extent must we dismantle these relationships in our already capitalist society?

History tells us the professionalism of cuisine was the result of a necessary public-turn manifest in the sale of French chef identity. Though selling identity

seems a risky venture, French cookbook authors remained in control of the sale of their identity. These chefs used their identity to make professional cooking into a legitimate profession worthy of codified practice and praise, but also the legitimacy of chef profession made the identity of French chefs meaningful. This is the point of disconnection between the example of lesbian chefs created by the media: television producers create lesbian chefs for capital gain. For a queer countercuisine to arise, lesbian chefs must also reclaim the creation and sale of their identity.

With queer chefs in control of discourse, the next focus of a queer counterpublic in professional cuisine would be who queer chefs position as addressees of this discourse. At present the sale of lesbian chef identity has been to audience members through normalized perspective of queerness, but critical in a queer counterpublic would be changing the social basis through which addressees are understood and anticipated, with excision of normalized sexual identity as the first step. Addressees of a queer counterpublic in professional cuisine would exist in tension with the current politics of queerness in present American society, necessarily rejecting the view that queerness must appeal to the dominant society. Removing normalization and the general goal of appealing to the dominant society would represent disconnecting from all of the dominant society values towards sex, gender and sexuality. But how would this change affect the appearance of cuisine? Would actual physical food be changed?

Food and the self exist in circular relation: food creates and sustains identity and identity similarly creates and sustains cuisine- but more importantly, both the food and self are performative practices. A queer countercuisine might not

necessarily alter the appearance of food, but the appearance of food has had relatively small part to play in the creation of professional cuisine and chef. We imagine *through* food- we create a discourse that others might pick up on. A queer consciousness, or "sensibility" as Birdsall describes it, does not need to alter the way food looks. Queer sensibility exists in food, but it exists as part of the imagining of food. How anonymous diners might understand this queer sensibility relies upon chef identity as it is broadcast in the restaurant kitchen and dining room floor. Is it possible to evoke queer consciousness in a restaurant This reality makes food television all the more interesting then for how it connects viewers with chefs, allowing for the sale of identity and discourse to reach an attentive public. Food television, rather than limiting identity to merely being a commodity, becomes a way of imagining the possibilities of mediatization. Michael Warner describes Hannah Arendt as envisioning "both freedom and individuality in the world-making public activity of the polis" (Warner 2005: 59). Arendt speaks to the power of the public for its relation between others and the individual. We make our worlds in publics; thus looking to the publics of food television versus those of the restaurant kitchen might constitute our best bet for changing the present and future social context of professional cooking.

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