

MANAAKITANGA AND MĀORI FOOD

Theoretical perspectives of advancement

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Abstract

This conceptual paper proposes a theoretical framework designed to enhance the reputation of Māori food within the culinascape of Aotearoa New Zealand. We consider the politics of edibility and identity, especially how edibility and acceptance of cuisine confers acceptance or not of New Zealand's *tangata whenua* "local people, aborigines, natives" (Ryan, 2001: 274), or Māori. In this regard, we write cognisant of Morris's (2010) *The Politics of Palatability: On the Absence of Māori Restaurants*, but theoretically extend Morris's (2010) position recommending how Derridean, Gadamerian and Māori constructs of *manaakitanga* ("hospitality"; Ngata, 1993: 209), can coalesce to provide a new way forward for Māori food in Aotearoa New Zealand. Specifically, and alongside these theoretical positions, we

promote that history provides Māori with a valuable template via La Varenne and the emergence of French cuisine during the reign of Louis XIV, as a way forward to recognising the importance of Māori food. We believe that the indigenous food of Māori could ultimately gain United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) heritage status. Our paper promotes this possibility.

Keywords

Manaakitanga, Māori, food, Pākehā, palatability, politics

Introduction

In *The Politics of Palatability: On the Absence of Māori Restaurants*, Carolyn Morris (2010: 6) “seeks to explain the absence of Māori food in the public ‘culinascape’ of Aotearoa New Zealand”. Māori are Aotearoa New Zealand’s indigenous population. Morris (2010) elaborates the political underpinning of her position, citing the work of Heldke (2003), Hage (1997, 1998) and Harbottle (2000), providing several suggestions for this absence. These include that “there is not a clientele” (Morris, 2010: 6); “Māori lack the economic resources to support restaurants” (ibid: 6); and that “Pākehā do not enjoy Māori food” (ibid: 6). Ryan (2001: 189) defined Pākehā as “non-Māori, European, Caucasian”, and this definition has broadened to include the descendants of settler colonists. Key to Morris’s (2010: 6) positioning was her assertion that “Māori hold a spoilt identity for Pākehā”, a situation reflecting her concern that, because of Māori activism, Māori are unassimilable, and, consequently, their food inedible. Morris (2010: 24) asserted that this is because Māori political action

signals a lack of Pākehā taste for Maori themselves, indicating that Maori have a spoilt identity. Maori identity is spoilt in two ways. The low status of Maori among Pākehā means that they are not considered good enough to eat.

Morris's (2010) paper achieves something unique in today's publish-or-perish academic environment: she has stimulated academic debate. We applaud her topic, its impact motivating our own contribution to this under-researched domain.

Cognisant of the politics of palatability, we promote Mannheim's (1929: 36) suggestion that

ruling groups can in their thinking become so intensively interest-bound to a situation that they are simply no longer able to see certain facts which would undermine their sense of domination.

Accordingly, we suggest, in agreement with Morris (2010), that portrayals of Māori hospitality within Aotearoa New Zealand serve to reinforce long-held perceptions – a mind-set established over time by many Pākehā. This mind-set subjugates Māori to the un-exotic 'other', yet we promote a subtle new understanding of difference through Derrida's "astonishment" (as cited in Dufourmantelle, 2000: 32) and Gadamer's (1992: 304) "fusion of horizon".

With this in mind, we explore *manaakitanga* hospitality (Ngata, 1993: 209) in order to add to Morris's (2010) positioning by illuminating hospitality from a Māori world-view schema. This perspective is valuable because the essence of *manaakitanga* is not focused on commercial imperatives, but rather holistic care which we relate to Derrida's (as cited in Dufourmantelle, 2000) conditional hospitality. We acknowledge Shepherd's (2002: 183) claim that "everything, including 'culture', is a potential commodity" reflects a Pākehā world-view schema starkly contrasting that of Māori.

To illuminate our position, cognisant of Morris (2010), our paper explores three constructs:

1. Derrida's (as cited in Dufourmantelle, 2000) hospitality;
2. the Māori world-view schema of *manaakitanga*; and

3. Gadamer's (1992: 304) "fusion of horizon".

We believe that these constructs potentialise wider appreciation of Māori food and cultural understanding. However, we need to state the obvious. While *we* write *Māori food and cultural understanding*, Māori would not differentiate the two: one, *is* the other. Consequently, our paper encourages a review of the meaning and importance of *manaakitanga* as a cultural imperative for Māori, and exemplifies how Pākehā constructs of hospitality, *vis-à-vis* cash transactions and profit motive, compromise Māori world-view schemas.

Derrida and Hospitality

Derrida is important, not only because of his posthumous recognition by Jacques Chirac (as cited in *The Washington Post*, 2004: C11) as "one of its greatest contemporary philosophers, one of the major figures of intellectual life of our time", but also, within this paper, because we align his philosophical deconstruction of hospitality to Gadamer's (1992: 304) "fusion of horizon".

This suggests that Derrida's positioning is conceptually important because he amalgamates a philosophical viewpoint holding real-world application within Māori hospitality and food consumption. Derrida's practicalities were encapsulated by Hemmington and Gibbons' (in press) suggestion that "the role of philosophy is to provide both tools and encouragement for a shift in thinking about the experience [of hospitality]".

Derrida (as cited in Dufourmantelle, 2000: 32) achieves this through his construct of "astonishment ... [being a call to] force(s) us to finally think ... to inaugurate a dialogue where nothing was planned". We align astonishment to Gadamer's (1992: 304) "fusion of horizon". However, it is prudent to briefly overview Derrida's hospitality constructs before integrating them into our topic, Māori food.

Derrida, as O’Gorman (2006) noted, extended the thinking of Levinas by differentiating the law of hospitality from the laws of hospitality, identifying absolute and conditional constructs of it. Poulston (in press) reflecting Derridian positioning, suggested that “conditional hospitality is an act of service that accrues debt ... [whereas] absolute hospitality is an unconditional gift that neither implies nor expects reciprocation”. This suggests that Derridian hospitality is either an ethical imperative (absolute), or a practical value (conditional). Within these domains, Derrida presents hospitality as a paradox. Yet, within this paradox, Derrida, as O’Gorman (2006) asserted, admits that all hospitality involves reciprocity of some sort.

Within a Māori context, it would be easy to assume that *manaakitanga* exemplifies Derrida’s (as cited in Dufourmantelle, 2000) absolute hospitality because it is embedded within *tikanga* “meaning, custom, obligation” (Ryan, 2001: 298). However, we will demonstrate, by later example of *tangi* (funeral) food, that *manaakitanga* is a conditional form of hospitality invoking reciprocity.

While food offering, for Māori, holds *mana* “integrity, charisma, prestige” (Ryan, 2001: 143), exemplifying care, it is none the less reciprocated in kind over time – albeit that contemporary constructs of cash exchange have clouded Māori *tikanga*.

Manaakitanga

This paper reflects the inherent dangers that exist when dominant cultures interpret aspects of indigenous cultural activities within their own world-view framework. We example this within the use of the word Māori. As Maaka and Flerras (2005: 66) suggested, constructs of tribe/*iwi* and *hapu* “sub-tribe/clan” (Ryan, 2001: 48) reveal that “Māori identity is multifaceted and fluid [in] nature” and so the concept of who is a Māori is “fraught with ambiguity and paradox” (2005: 68). Yet, Māori, as identifier, is conveniently used by many Pākehā,

including academics, to define all Māori. Thus, as we will demonstrate, one cannot assume there is one Māori identity that practices one form of *manaakitanga*.

Manaakitanga is one of the most important Māori social principles (Hook and Raumati, 2011). In terms of defining *manaakitanga*, Hall (2012) and Hayen (2009) suggested that Māori hospitality is enmeshed within the concept of *manaakitanga*. As Hall (2012: 13) suggested, *manaakitanga* reflects “the custom of offering hospitality and kindness to guests, [and] is central to making people feel welcome and is inherent within the Māori ethos”. While expressions of *manaakitanga* differ for Māori, its philosophy is shared by Māori within and outside of Māori culture. As Philip-Barbara (2011: n.p.) noted

manaakitanga is a very important tenet of Maori custom and identity, and identity that has, I believe, positively influenced notions of good old ‘Kiwi’ hospitality. At its core, manaakitanga is about how we make people feel welcome when they are in our company, and how we give regard to and care for others when hosting visitors. Perhaps the most recognised and common place where people see this custom practiced and experienced is on marae across the country. Certainly though for those iwi, hapu, whanau and wider communities for whom the language is an everyday enterprise, manaakitanga is a more habitual convention, evident in all interactions however great or small.

Mead (2003: 74) noted that *manaakitanga* is an expected behavioural norm for Māori, suggesting “all tikanga are underpinned by the high value placed upon *manaakitanga* – nurturing relationships, looking after people, and being very careful about how others are treated”. *Manaakitanga* has been adapted by academics and government agencies in ways impacting its *wairua* “attitude, mood, spirit, soul” (Ryan, 2001: 335) and consequent meaning, especially for Māori. This is evidenced in the promotion of *manaakitanga* by Government within tourist experiences of Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand. While the generic use of *manaakitanga* is common, Martin (2010) recognised that *manaakitanga* is understood

to represent hospitality and reciprocity, and that its interpretation could be problematic, potentially compromising cultural practice, especially within tourist operations. This is similar to the findings of Berno (1999). Berno suggested that the differing ways in which hospitality, particularly expectations around reciprocity, was conceptualised by host nationals (in this case Cook Islanders) and their guests (predominantly Western) had implications for subsequent sociocultural impacts. As Martin (2010: 129) noted, “*manaakitanga* is a cultural value that does not involve the exchange of money”. Martin’s (2010) position automatically compromises the money driven, for profit, hospitality economy of Pākehā.

Manaakitanga derives from the Māori root word *mana*. *Manaakitanga* reflects an aspirational relationship of recognition, in that its attribution is received and not forced upon individuals or groups (Martin, 2010). Martin (2010: 128) reminds us that “*mana* is a spiritual power that can be possessed by an individual or group” and that for some groups *mana* includes supernatural qualities. While *mana* evokes themes of power, control, influence and earned respect, Pere (1982) noted that its translation is not truly possible outside the Māori language. Translation and meaning difficulties are reflected in Moon’s (1993: 116) observation that “translation between languages usually necessitates the reconciliation of different modes of thinking as a priority over terminology”. *Man-a-ki* reflects an ability to care for visitors that is verbally communicated bestowing *mana*; *a-ki* denoting the declaration by others of *mana* and through communicating its ‘sharing’. Māori are reminded of this through the placing of the “*mauri manaaki* or talisman of hospitality” (Martin, 2010: 128) on the left-hand side of the entrance to *marae* buildings. *Tanga* (a qualifier) changes the verb to a noun (Martin, 2010).

Williams (1975) advised that *akiaki* (within *mana-aki*) evokes an urging on, reflecting hospilities enactment. These distinctions are important because, as Martin (2010) asserted, *manaakitanga* needs to be recognised through its constituent parts. However, as we demonstrate, the concept of *manaakitanga* is severely

devalued by limiting its translation to mere ‘hospitality’, as defined by many Pākehā and academics.

Ngāti Kahungunu ki te Wairoa representative, Kitea Tipuna, illuminated this in considering the “place” of money at a *tangi* (personal communication with Kitea Tipuna, 26 November 2014). A *tangi* is a funeral service held on a *marae*. The *tangi* is hosted by two key groups: the *kirimate* “chief mourners” (Ryan, 2001: 109) including immediate family, and the *hau kainga* “extended family” (personal communication with Kitea Tipuna, 26 November 2014). It is the responsibility of the *marae* to host and cater to the needs of the *tangi*.

Contemporarily, to defray *tangi* expenses money is given either to the *marae* or to the grieving family. However, an exchange of money has not always taken place at *tangi* gatherings. As Kitea recounted:

if Māori food becomes commercial, we will lose the heart of things, our identification, our being and our mana. Before Pākehā and money, we exchanged food and gifts at occasions like tangi. For us, money is anathema, it takes away the wairua of the context [of a tangi or other event] in our wider and holistic culture.

Before money was exchanged at a *tangi*, many of the gifts and foods offered reflected the variety in geographic abundance. These elements add a much wider dimension to the meaning of food for Māori, and reflect how Pākehā influences and customs (exemplified through the exchange of money for goods and services) have served to dilute the holistic nature of Māori culture and *tikanga*.

We suggest that, as identifiers and descriptors, Māori and *manaakitanga* are contested domains reflecting diverse ways of being and becoming, and holding multiple meaning and interpretation depending on interlocutorial positioning.

Clearly, transliteration and lazy cultural appropriation of identifiers devalues their richness, meaning, potency and *wairua*. The construct of *manaakitanga* within *tangi*

occasions adds weight to our position that the definition of Māori *manaakitanga*/hospitality is not only at odds with its *wairua/tikanga* for Māori, but starkly contrasts Pākehā constructs of hospitality.

Consequently, we propose that an enriched perspective of *manaakitanga* via the gaze of Gadamer's (1992: 304) "fusion of horizon" can address these dichotomies and in doing so lead to a greater appreciation of Māori and Māori food.

Gadamer's Horizon

A lineage of hermeneutic phenomenologists offers ways to understand our world and its lived experience. Within hermeneutic phenomenology, hermeneutics engages the interpretation of text, while phenomenology tends to engage the "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990: 27). This noted, the two themes, hermeneutics and phenomenology, can be merged into one research method.

Edmund Husserl is noted as the founding father of phenomenological philosophy, his position extended by Max Scheler's emphasis on personal and value phenomenology; Edith Stein's empathetic and phenomenologies of faith; Martin Heidegger's phenomenological ontology; and Jan Patocka's phenomenology of personal practice. From these early positions, hermeneutics and phenomenology were expanded by Emmanuel Levinas's ethical phenomenology; Jean-Paul Sartre's existential phenomenology; and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's embodiment phenomenology (van Manen, 2014).

However, it is Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic phenomenological perspective that provides a unique way to understand and enrich our knowledge of *manaakitanga* and Māori food. As van Manen (2014: 132) reminded us, "Gadamer applies the textual hermeneutics ... to human experience and [to] life in general".

Key to our understanding is Gadamer's (1992: 304) "fusion of horizon" construct. We parallel this construct to Derrida's (as cited in Dufourmantelle, 2000: 32) invitation to think in terms of "astonishment ... [being called to] force(s) us to finally think ... to inaugurate a dialogue where nothing was planned". While Gadamer's (1992) lack of a stated methodology within hermeneutic phenomenology is clear, he does provide a framework of understanding.

Gadamer (1992) offers researchers and conversationalists engaged in this discourse a way to reveal the process they undertook in coming to a deeper or new understanding, by engaging the hermeneutic circle. The hermeneutic circle involves the ongoing interaction between

how the understanding of parts relates to the understanding of a larger whole and vice versa. This movement back and forth, between the parts and the whole in the process of understanding is described by the hermeneutic circle. (Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2010: 132).

Gadamer (1992: 304) promoted the hermeneutic circle as the ongoing engagement between the researchers own positioning and baggage - linguistic, cultural and historical contexts, including pluralism, uniqueness and socio-temporal positioning - blending with and juxtaposing or contradicting that of the participants, and generating a "fusion of horizon". Gadamer's (1992) construct of horizon is potent because geographically we never reach the horizon, consequently our complete understanding, of Māori food or any other topic, is never "completely possible". Gadamer (1992: 302) reflected that a horizon "bespeaks the productively mediated relation between what is distant and near; it enables us to discern both what is close up and what is far away without excluding either of these positions". Further, Gadamer (1992: 305) noted

the concept of 'horizon' suggests itself because it expresses the superior breadth of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand - not in order

to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion.

We posit that it is within this very grounding that enrichment and understanding of Māori food can occur. Thus far, and in accordance with Morris's (2010) paper, the "boxing" match – the jousting of Māori food and Pākehā acceptance of it – has yet to "let its guard" of cultural dominance down enough to allow new dialogue to occur.

We envisage the "fusion of horizon" (Gadamer, 1992: 304) promoting Māori food as a base for the development of a New Zealand cuisine; a cuisine fusing not just the elements and ingredients of Asia as priority and current trend, but rather the ingredients and hospitality of *tangata whenua*. We believe this is best achieved within *hui* "gathering, meeting" (Ryan, 2001: 67) led by a champion of Māori food. Māori food, like the vernacular collectability of Māoriana (Bell, 2012), needs to move from being subordinate to Pākehā culture, towards becoming a vehicle hallmarking Aotearoa New Zealand through uniqueness, consumptive enjoyment and representation of the country's famed (yet mythical) egalitarianism.

Putting It All Together

Food, cuisine and food traditions are among the most fundamental elements of culture. As such, they can provide a foundation for the exploration of and introduction to another culture. We provide a way forward for Māori food suggesting that, cognizant of Derrida (as cited in Dufourmantelle, 2000) and Gadamer (1992), Māori food can, by following the French example, reposition itself as arbiter of style, taste and sophistication within Aotearoa New Zealand's "culinascape" (Morris, 2010: 7). We believe that Māori food requires a champion, a contemporary Aotearoa-ian La Varenne: someone to co-ordinate and make Māori food accessible, desired, and valued by consumers. Specifically, we believe *manaakitanga* is elevated through a Derridean (as cited in Dufourmantelle, 2000) lens. Derrida contextualises constructs of hospitality within ideals of absolute and

conditional hospitality that, when applied to *manaakitanga*, align it to hospitality's philosophical positioning. This contextualises *manaakitanga* within a wider world-view schema, and in doing so releases *manaakitanga* from its insular Aotearoa-ian narrative onto the world stage of academe and hospitality offering. Such realisation opens up new possibilities.

However, for Māori food to reach a wider consumer base, Derrida (as cited in Dufourmantelle, 2000) is not enough. While Derrida provides a theoretical base, it is the operationalisation of Gadamer's (1992: 304) "fusion of horizon" that will best effect change. Horizon fusion may be best facilitated within *hui*, best called by a champion of Māori food. Food facilitates a meeting point and mediation. It promotes reciprocity as understood in Māori tradition.

Hui dialogue would enable participants to explore each other's world view, linguistic, cultural and historical contexts, including pluralism, uniqueness and socio-temporal positioning. In doing so, *hui* would generate an enriched new understanding and way of being for Māori food. This process, its communication and associated *mana* are encapsulated within the word *manaakitanga*. As Williams (1975) advised, *akiaki* (within *mana-aki*) evokes an urging on, reflecting hospitality's holistic enactment through *hui*. This process is necessary if Māori are to understand Pākehā constructs of food and vice versa. Assuming Morris's (2010) point, that Māori food is a metaphorical representation of race relations in Aotearoa New Zealand, then such *hui* could help solve more problems than the Māori food debate alone; in essence, providing a common meeting ground for the de-colonisation of Māori cuisine.

In keeping with a reciprocal approach, Māori can also take learnings from European food history. We aid this endeavour by discussing how the evolution of French cuisine could provide a valuable template and "fusion of horizon"

(Gadamer, 1992: 304) promoting a wider appreciation of Māori food that could facilitate *hui* discussion.

France's influence as a centre for discerning taste, style and sophistication has echoed around the world since the time of Louis XIV. Two fashion themes dominated this success, clothing and food (de Jean, 2005). While the court of Louis XIV set fashion style for men and women, food provided a forum through which entrepreneurial chefs codified cuisine, essentially creating the style of French cuisine we know today. La Varenne capitalised on this by publishing a cookbook that not only sold well but also created his celebrity. Integral to the book's success was public realisation of emergent new language used to discuss and describe food. This language generated status and differentiation via food knowledge. de Jean (2005: 108) exemplified this, noting how the language of food came to incorporate descriptors including "dainty, delicate, refined, courteous [and] civilised". Their binary opposites are clear. La Varenne's food became "a domain in which sophistication was possible and desirable" (de Jean, 2005: 108). Language and food's elevation via gastronomy made it essential "to the new civilisation of good [French] taste" (de Jean, 2005: 108).

Because La Varenne's books (he published a pastry tome too) elevated French cuisine to haute cuisine standard he simultaneously merged both, noting a blend of food representing "our France [and our] way of life" (as cited in de Jean, 2005: 108) and that "by the end of the Sun King's reign, his countrymen were eating many of the dishes that are still featured on the menus of restaurants today" (de Jean, 2005: 116). La Varenne's books, combined with the public's fascination with using food as a social differentiator, combined to create an image of France and French chefs that survives today. Simply put, food created new ways of being and becoming that evoked style, sophistication and taste that Naccarato and LeBesco (2012: 3) would, some three hundred years later, term "culinary capital".

We suggest the time is right for Māori to seize their cuisine, in a similar way to that in which the French have embraced theirs, and through its codification and ultimate valorisation elevate its culinary status beyond the *marae* into domains of wider access and desirability.

While we promote a Māori champion, *hui* and food discussion, we also realise that wider socio-political factors are necessary if Māori food is to gain traction. Again, history and the French provide guidance through Louis XIV's Minister of Finance, Jean-Baptiste Colbert. Colbert insured that "every aspect of high-end merchandising – from trade regulations to import duties – was tailored in favour of his nation's business community" (de Jean, 2005: 7). Colbert ensured that manufacture was French based and that there was a ready market of devotees. Colbert's influence, like French food, survives today and monitors counterfeit products under legislation known as the Comité Colbert (Comité Colbert, 2015).

France currently imposes harsh penalties for copying its fashion products, a move adding more value, style and sophistication for its consumers. French food is controlled through the Appellation d'origine Contrôlée. As the Alliance Française (2015: n.p.) noted

a cuisine this refined and historically rich takes time and effort to maintain. It is for this reason that France protects many of its culinary treasures with special laws and certifications such as the Appellation d'origine contrôlée (Controlled Destination of Origin). These standards serve to protect not only their authenticity, but also their quality.

This construct, its emphasis on terroir and quality, is being considered by the Collège Culinaire de France:

in April [2013], the Collège Culinaire de France, led by all-star chef duo Alain Ducasse and Joel Robuchon, launched a new label named Restaurant de Qualité. The seal is aimed at artisan restaurants, which can join if they meet certain

standards on product origins, freshness and diner satisfaction. (The Guardian, 2013: n.p.)

As discussed above, food, cuisine and food traditions are among the most foundational elements of culture. This has been recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) through the formal recognition of cuisine as an element of intangible heritage. UNESCO (2010: n.p.) specifically recognises, as intangible cultural heritage, the “Gastronomic Food of the French”, specifically the

customary social practice for celebrating important moments in the lives of individuals and groups, such as births, weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, achievements and reunions [through food including] ... a fixed structure, commencing with an apéritif (drinks before the meal) and ending with liqueurs, containing in between at least four successive courses, namely a starter, fish and/or meat with vegetables, cheese and dessert.

Clearly, if Māori food in Aotearoa New Zealand is to find success, a socio-political environment of nurture and support must be created that could ultimately result in UNESCO recognition of Māori food as valued cultural heritage.

Conclusion

Food is a marker of identity and status. Our paper recognises, using Morris’s (2010) research, that Māori food is not only undervalued in itself, but representative of Māori’s subordinate position to Pākehā in Aotearoa New Zealand. While recognising these domains, we disagree and propose a way forward for Māori, integrating theoretical perspectives and history.

We recommend that conversation via *hui*, and the identification of a Māori food champion can, through the operationalisation of the theoretical positions of Derrida (as cited in Dufourmantelle, 2000), Gadamer (1992) and the embodiment of traditional Māori hospitality enacted through *manaakitanga*, provide a way

forward that will not only enhance the reputation of Māori food, but also the state of race relations in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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