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Food and Migration: The Case of Bulgarians in Munich

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Abstract

This article considers the transformation of migrants' food tastes in the context of their integration into the host society. Fieldwork with several groups of first generation Bulgarian migrants was conducted in Munich. Because of the emotional, sensory and mnemonic effects of the consumption of native food, bringing food items from Bulgaria appeared crucial for immigrants' nutritional practices. Different levels of preservation and transformation of the "original Bulgarian taste" were shown, depending primarily on the social and marital status of the immigrants. The great importance of ritual food and the role of cuisine as a signifier of origin and identity are clearly shown in the text. The conscious treating of foreign guests to Bulgarian dishes reflects the capacities of food as an instrument of self-revelation (deliberate or even involuntary). Differences between Bulgarian and German attitudes towards cooking and eating result in an active cultural exchange, in which Germans borrow much more Bulgarian food items and nutritional practices than vice versa.

It is well known that food habits are deeply embedded in the personalities of individuals; they are stable and long lasting. Perceptions of what is tasty and what is not are culturally determined. Despite being conservative and long lasting, food practices are also subject to change (Opere-Obisaw et al. 2000: 145). The reasons for changes are to be found in processes of cultural globalization and the resulting homogenization of food. Migration also causes inevitable changes in food practices. Immigrants, especially those of the first generation, experience transitional cultural dilemmas of resistance and change (Koc, Welsh 2001: 3). Different stages and levels of enculturation, assimilation and integration in the host society are reflected in the fluidity of immigrants' cultural identity. Food changes among them also may be viewed as an example of cultural diffusion or borrowings of elements from a foreign culture. New eating habits, new behaviours, new experiences and tastes of the immigrants are due not only to their cultural and spacial transition, but are deeply influenced by cultural globalization as well. And because globalization presupposes hybridization (Pieterse 1995), their food practices (like their culture as a whole) are more or less being hybridized – they are a specific mixture of "native" dishes and "foreign" borrowings (in our case most of them are not German, but Italian, French, etc.).

Food choices are no longer limited to the social and cultural contexts of either the home country or the host country (Bouchet 1995, Cook, Crank 1996).

Yet first generation migrants are frequently very resistant to dietary change. According to Bourdieu's *habitus* theory, this resistance is due to the fact that individual taste is a result of the *initial capital* of a person, which includes factors such as one's social status in the past, family, ancestors and the like. *Habitus* is an orientation towards certain tastes, which is inherited, long lasting and sometimes even unconscious – it stems from the family context and it is not subject to change even in case of social (and presumably spacial) individual mobility (Bourdieu 1990: 130–131). Another explanation is found in the so-called “principle of incorporation”: because food is being absorbed, it crosses the border between the “outside” and the “inside”, so it touches upon the very nature of a person. This is the reason why some migrants retain certain food habits when language and other cultural expressions tend to be forgotten (Fischler 1988: 275, Scholliers 2001: 8). Using Fernandez' concept of “returning to the whole” (Fernandez 1986), David Sutton acknowledges that through food the past is embodied into the present – “the memory of taste and smell leads to the *emotional* effect and the sense of *emotional/embodied plenitude*” (Sutton 2001: 82). Food, memory and the construction of identities are strongly interconnected. Food has certain mnemonic qualities – it evokes memories of time, place and belonging (Kravva 2001: 141). Eating could be seen as a “sensory point of entry into a web of sentiments, memories and fantasies, which largely constitute the sense of identity” (Goddard 1996: 213).

In this context, the main aim of my research among the Bulgarians in Munich was not simply to trace changes in their food practices, but to examine the way their taste is being transformed. Having in mind classical concepts of food as signifier, classifier and identity builder (Bourdieu 1984, Levi Strauss 1997, Douglas 1999), I was interested in the relation between this alteration of taste and transformations of their individual and collective identity. As we shall see below, Ferda Erdinc's statement that “Taste memory travels with you in such a way that awareness of it is usually discovered in the absence of that taste in real life” (Erdinc 2001: 93) is valid for many immigrants, too.

My research among Bulgarian immigrants in Munich consisted of 25 semi structured in-depth interviews with people who migrated to Germany in different periods of time.¹ Two of them are old people, who “escaped” from communist Bulgaria in the 1960s and 70s. Thirteen are students or recently graduated

¹ The fieldwork was done in January – February 2008 during my visit as an Erasmus teacher in the Institute für Volkskunde/European Ethnology, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich. I want to thank Profs. Klaus and Juliana Roth for their help and support.

young people working in Germany; four are middle-aged women with successful careers. Members of the staff of a Bulgarian restaurant, visitors to the Bulgarian church and the Bulgarian priest in Munich were also interviewed. All the respondents are first generation migrants, except for one, who was born in Germany in the family of a German father and Bulgarian mother. Some indirect data about the children of the respondents (representatives of the second generation migrants, most born in Germany or living there since childhood) were also collected. My concentration was on the first generation migrants, who according to anthropological literature were expected to stick to their native dishes and flavours or to experience different stages of hybridization in terms of food. As a rule their children, the second generation, are the ones to import the food practices of the dominant culture into their homes (Fischler 1993: 103, Levenstein 1997: 469). As we shall see below, neither of these two “rules” proved absolutely applicable to the case of Bulgarians in Munich.

“Returning to the whole” via food

According to data for the 2004–2005 academic year, the number of Bulgarian students in Germany (12456) is the highest of all students from Europe; on a world scale it concedes the first rank only to the number of Chinese students (Liakova 2008: 46). There is an inner differentiation within this group. The students who came earlier – in the early 1990s, when there was no established Bulgarian student community in Germany – are more open to the host society. There is a clear tendency of ethnic closing among those who came in the last three or four years, when such a community had already been institutionalized (Liakova 2008: 56). The “isolationists” do not wish to have any contacts with Germans and segregate themselves within the boundary of their Bulgarian circle. As a group, most of them perceive Germany as a country for making money and they do not plan to live there long. Those who came earlier are willing to be integrated into German society, some of them have married Germans, they have started successful careers and most of them are planning to live in Germany in the future. This differentiation among the Bulgarian students and young people who have already graduated from German universities is a rough starting point for examining their eating habits. In accordance with expectations, the “isolationists” tend to cook predominantly Bulgarian dishes, they do not wish even to taste any German meals because they are convinced not only that Bulgarian cuisine is the most tasty, but that even the dishes of exquisite restaurants are not good. Here is part of the interview with a young girl working in such a restaurant with a group of Bulgarian colleagues:

"It is a very expensive restaurant, their dishes are quite exquisite and it was very interesting for me to taste some of them. All the other Bulgarian students working there were always spitting at the dishes, saying 'Oh, have you tried that, its disgusting; who is this cook, let him come and try my wife's moussaka in order to understand what a real meal is'."²

Food conservatism of these young people is similar to that of one of the oldest respondents. He came to Germany in 1977 and for all these years he did not like even one German meal, at all:

"Nothing of their food is tasty, absolutely nothing. My mother used to cook predominantly vegetarian dishes and this is what I ate my whole life. I tried almost nothing of German cuisine. In German restaurants I order only vegetarian garnishes such as potatoes. I ate beans yesterday and the day before yesterday and I have some beans left for today and tomorrow."³

He himself is not able to answer the question why such monotony is not boring for him. This is an example of the cultural, habitual and archetypal nature of taste as something not constructed or figured out, but deeply coded in the very essence of self.

Those students who are more "open" towards the host society also share the idea of the "superior Bulgarian taste", but they have experienced more or less significant taste transformations. Many of them declare that after coming to Germany their diet became more varied and healthier, with less fat. For some students the level of food security (defined as access by all people to safe and adequate food – Campbell et al. 1988) has increased. Although they consider local fruits and vegetables tasteless, they are more accessible to them than in Bulgaria.⁴ In Germany they tried for the first time such exotic fruits as mango, papaya and the like, which in Bulgaria were too expensive for them. The cultural shock of the initial enculturation was combined with the fact that for the first time in their lives some of these young people were supposed to cook for themselves. In Bulgaria cooking was their mothers' task. So, in the beginning (for a period of several months to one year) they used to live on French fries, spaghetti and more simple Bulgarian meals, constantly asking their mothers on the phone how

² Informant V. M., born 1982 in Sofia. She lives in Germany since 2002 and recently married a German.

³ Informant G. M, born 1923 in the town of Lukovit. He has no wife to cook for him, but even when he was married to a Bulgarian woman he ate almost the same. From all the respondents he is the only one to remember the first Bulgarian restaurant in Munich.

⁴ Informant I. B., born 1986 in the village of Dorkovo, student.

exactly to cook them. In the course of time they started borrowing recipes from their fellow students, but mainly Italian, Chinese etc., and a considerable variety appeared in their meals. For them Bulgarian cuisine is a good option among many others. Some cases of slow acceptance of German food products, initially considered not tasty, were registered. For example, when given for the first time a drink of apple juice and carbonated water, a young girl thought "how disgusting it is" and now, a few years later, she even likes it and drinks it regularly.⁵ "Weißwurst", the typical Bavarian sausage, is still not accepted by many Bulgarians. On the whole, after a certain period of time (which differs among individuals), immigrants start eating German food due to new habits they acquire. Yet all of them are more or less nutritionally homesick. They miss certain food items and associate the image of their home country with the smell and the taste of baked peppers, salads and cheese, traditional pastry and other favourite products and dishes. Sutton calls this "burning desire that is satiated through a sensory experience, evoking local knowledge" (Sutton 2001: 81).

In comparison with other immigrant communities, for which accessibility but not availability of native food items was the major concern (because of the distance, time and price paid for accessing these items – Koc, Welsh 2001: 8), in my sample availability is the bigger problem. Compared with Bulgarian products, the local ones are considered inferior in terms of taste: although native recipes are followed, the dishes are quite different from their Bulgarian equivalents.⁶ Nevertheless, respondents of all groups try to adjust local culinary context to their flavour and to recreate the original Bulgarian taste they like best. Because it is expensive and time consuming, some people cook this way only when they have enough time – once or twice a month. Many others, belonging to different groups, stick to the Bulgarian cooking "because this is the best for me", or "out of habit, not because I am insisting my cooking must be exactly Bulgarian".

The adjustment to "Bulgarian taste" is sought in two main ways. The first is to stick to original recipes and try to find local substitutes for the ingredients. The best cooks (two middle aged women with Bulgarian husbands and successful careers in Germany) compensate for the "tastelessness" of German products by using Bulgarian spices. Some of these species are brought from Bulgaria, because local ones are considered no good. The second way of adjusting local food to the Bulgarian taste is to improvise and to prepare international meals which taste Bulgarian. In this case informants follow their basic ideas about what suits

⁵ Informant N. O., born 1986 in the village of Lesidren.

⁶ Such a tendency of hyperbolization of tasteful native products is typical for other migrant groups too (Sutton 2001: 79).

what, i. e., what spices and dressings to use in order to achieve a certain effect. Such an approach is more creative and more unusual: "I am always changing something in the recipe, but its core is always Bulgarian, I want it to be so."⁷ The first way is more direct and widespread – immigrants seek suitable products in German shops in order to prepare their native meals. This task is time-consuming, difficult, expensive and sometimes simply impossible, because the taste of German ingredients is quite different. Local vegetables and fruits, even the so-called bio products (which are more expensive) are not accepted at all. They are considered tasteless, artificial, "plastic". This is especially true for tomatoes.⁸ All the respondents claim that they deeply miss tasty Bulgarian tomatoes:

"It is absolutely impossible to find decent tomatoes here, the only ones which partially resemble our tomatoes are the Sicilian ones – they cost 10 euro per kilo. They only look like ours in shape and you imagine how it is supposed to be in terms of taste and you buy them, you make a compromise with yourself."⁹

Looking for the "original taste", various food items are bought from Balkan shops, where they are more expensive – white cheese from the Greeks, lamb from the Turks, vegetables and fruits from both types of shops. When one of the respondents went to buy cheese in a Greek shop and the shopkeeper started telling her how delicious this cheese was, she told him: "Please, don't explain this to me, I am Bulgarian." After a short pause he said: "It is as good as yours."¹⁰ What is illuminating in this example is that he did not dare say "It is better than yours". Very rarely and for a short time some original Bulgarian vegetables appear in the big supermarkets and women are constantly checking what is available. They share information about where to go in order to find the most suitable products. Providing them is a very important task. Some of the narratives of seeking the most appropriate food items resemble quite a lot the discourses about searching for scarce products in the time of socialism. Shopping in Greek and Turkish shops is more expensive, so it is not accessible to everyone. Students prefer supermarkets because of the lower prices; but almost all the women with decent jobs and relatively good social status, who are able to afford shopping in Balkan shops, tend to buy there regularly.

⁷ Informant I. N., born 1970.

⁸ The qualities of Bulgarian tomatoes were acknowledged by many foreigners, too. Some of them, like Prof. Peter Black, for example (see footnote 31), even consider them best in the world, an assertion that might be resisted in other parts of the Balkans.

⁹ Informant A. R., born 1958.

¹⁰ Informant K. G., born 1975 in Sofia, living in Germany since 1995, married to a German.

Food migration

Because of the difficulty of finding suitable substitutes, a considerable number of foodstuffs are imported from Bulgaria by people travelling with regular busses from Sofia to Munich. There is no limitation to the weight of the luggage as on aeroplanes, but passengers are allowed to have only one bag for free, so this bag is deliberately chosen to be as big as possible.

"This bag is, as my mother says, as big as an elephant's penis and it is full of food. Many times they stopped me at the borders and wanted to see what was inside. They were shocked and asked 'Are you going to open a storehouse?' It was a big shame, because I was carrying food not only for me, but also for my sister. For each of us – three big tin cans of cheese, six pieces of yellow cheese, all kinds of salami and traditional sausages and many jars with baked peppers, lyutenitsa¹¹ etc. – and you need three people to carry this bag."¹²

Not all the respondents were so lucky in transferring food. For example, some bus drivers established their own rules about how many pieces of cheese, yellow cheese, sausages and the like were to be taken in a bag. Exceeding their authority, they examined luggage and even sometimes just threw away products. In spite of all these problems, people still carry food items. Even sauerkraut is regularly carried by Bulgarian passengers, although Germany is famous for its sauerkraut. German sauerkraut is not considered good at all. It is too stiff, with vinegar, and it is cut into pieces, which is why it is not suitable for preparation for Bulgarian style stuffed cabbage leaves (*sărmi*). Some respondents have tried several times to produce their own sauerkraut with no success,¹³ maybe because of the lack of certain bacteria in Germany, the local sort obviously is quite different.

In the period before 2001, when the regulations for aeroplane safety were not so strict, the quantity of transferred food was even bigger. There are data on carrying half a pig, bred by grandparents in a village; of a whole lamb or of a handbag full of peppers. Nowadays carrying food is so widespread that many people usually travel by bus precisely for this reason. Aeroplane passengers usually put well wrapped up sausages or bottles of brandy between the clothes in their valises. It is worth noting that carrying foodstuff is typical of people of different social status, even members of higher classes. More differences in terms of class

¹¹ Lyutenitsa (*ljutenica*) is a traditional puree made of baked peppers and tomatoes.

¹² Informant K. G., born 1975 in Sofia, married to a German.

¹³ Only one man with great culinary and gardening capacities managed to make his own sauerkraut, and the reason for his success remains a secret.

were registered in cooking. The most striking example of how important original food items are for Bulgarians is the case of a young girl studying in Munich whose parents work in Spain. She goes to Spain more frequently than to Bulgaria and her mother supplies her with sheets of the traditional homemade pastry *banica*. According to respondents, substitutes for these pastry leaves cannot be found in Germany. Many people use Greek ones, which are as thin as Bulgarian ones; Turkish ones are thicker, but they are also used when there is no other option. When going to Bulgaria, the mother provides herself with pastry leaves and keeps half of them for several months in Spain in order to give them to her daughter in Germany. Thus a food migration that follows the twists of human migration was registered. In Sutton's words "eating food from home becomes a particularly marked cultural site for the re-imagining of 'worlds' displaced in space and/or in time" (Sutton 2001: 84).

For many respondents the desire for native products diminishes over time. In the first years after their arrival to Germany, because of the process of adaptation, they felt the lack of their home cuisine more: „In time, sooner or later you give up and start cooking with local products.”¹⁴ The scope of transferred food products is diminishing and only the most important of them remain: some spices, cheese and pastry sheets, some traditional meat products and brandy. The high value of the pastry is found not only in its taste, but also in its capacity to fit all kinds of occasions.¹⁵ The pastry is highly appreciated even by the respondent who has the strongest orientation towards integration into the host society. He is 27 years old and already has a decent job. He believes that integration has to be quick and easy, which is why he has deliberately rejected Bulgarian food and is the only one to declare that he likes and values German cuisine. The only thing which is "really Bulgarian" according to him is pastry, and he makes it himself on calendar feasts, following the tradition.¹⁶

The gradual diminishing of quantities of food items brought from Bulgaria is due not only to adaptation processes but also to the fact that the quality of Bulgarian provisions is deteriorating. During the socialist period there was no variety of foodstuffs, but most food products were considered good and it was much easier to judge and to choose a high quality product. With the industrialization and marketization of food production after 1989 there came a great variety of

¹⁴ Informant I. G., born 1964, living in Germany since 1992.

¹⁵ "It is festive and daily, it is suitable for breakfast, for dinner, for supper. I have treated so many people to *banica*, so many Germans – all of them like it very much" (Informant I. N., born 1970).

¹⁶ Informant N. G., born 1981. What is interesting in his case is the fact that although he wants to "forget about Bulgaria" he is among the leading figures in the Bulgarian church in Munich.

products, and the choice is now much more difficult. As a whole, food quality in terms of taste has deteriorated. This was one of the expected results of the country's access to the EU – in the popular discourse the expectation that "when we become members they will make us produce their tasteless vegetables" was commonly heard.

"Now you don't know what is good – during socialism there was one type of goat cheese – you take it and you know that this is a goat cheese. Now there are so many types of cheese that you really don't know which is the right one. Sometimes more expensive food is good, but not always – sometimes you can give big money for nothing."¹⁷

The problem with the Bulgarian production is its unpredictability. Usually a new trademark appears on the market with good quality, but after a short period of time, when people have started acknowledging it as good, it suddenly changes and becomes really bad. This is due to the lack of efficient state control and the wish of producers to make quick and big money by saving on raw materials or on technology. For example, the tasteful tomatoes migrants are longing for disappeared from the local Bulgarian market in the last two years because farmers are economizing on water, so tomatoes cannot grow red. That is why Bulgaria is importing tomatoes from other countries, mainly from Turkey. Being accustomed to the predictability and sustained quality of German products, immigrants are often annoyed and disappointed by the fact that they make such efforts in carrying products so far which finally turn out to be of poor quality: "In Bulgaria you never know what is inside the packing. I was cheated so many times when I brought expensive things here with incredible efforts and found out that they were bullshit and I had to throw them away."¹⁸ But the same happens with the official export of Bulgarian production. For example, German firms importing Bulgarian wine prefer the white wines, because the percentage of low quality among them is lower. The problem with Bulgarian red wines (which are more famous in Europe) is that there are big differences between the shipments of one and the same trademark.¹⁹

Selling Bulgarian food in Munich

Although interest in Bulgarian provisions among the migrants is continuing, there is only one shop providing such products in Munich. It was not established

¹⁷ Informant M. R., born 1971 in a family with German father and Bulgarian mother.

¹⁸ Informant K. G., born 1975.

¹⁹ Informant G. M., born 1973, working in a German firm importing Bulgarian wines.

as a Bulgarian shop, it is just that some of the “precious” food items are sold there. For unknown reasons it is not very popular among the immigrants; the owner says that the clients are not as many as he expected, maybe because of the prices. So his main activity is to provide supplies to the Bulgarian restaurant “Rila”. A woman who owns a travel agency for trips to Bulgaria is selling *lyutenitsa*, waffles, tinned goods and brandy in her office. These products are arranged on a shelf inside the room and are not visible from the outside, even though they are legally imported.²⁰ According to the owner, students really enjoy sorts of waffles, those typical of the socialist period. Russian and Ukrainian students are also looking for these wafers, because they were imported into the USSR in the past. Some Germans used to buy Bulgarian goods, too. They especially like *lyutenitsa*; one lady even came with an empty jar and asked for “20 of these”. The owner says that this product is like a narcotic: it is so delicious that after trying it once, one gets addicted and cannot stop eating and wanting it. Yet most of the respondents do not buy food from this place (or from the above mentioned shop, which is located nearby). In addition to disliking the informal nature of this trade (they consider selling food in a travel agency rather strange and “too rustic”), they claim that prices are high. The owner enjoys an extraordinary food supply line for her own needs from Bulgaria, because she works with the regular bus companies. That is why for her there is no limitation to the quantities she can get, and people are angry because of this: “She acts as if this is her own bus.” Maybe the envy over the fact that she is able to cook predominantly with original products is also a motivation for not buying food from her. For example, she does not make traditional pastry, because her mother makes it for her and sends it by the bus – “after 20 hours it is not cooled down yet and we eat it”.²¹ Having real homemade pastry in Germany is a luxury. Many respondents dare only to dream of receiving a frozen prefabricated version, which is not so delicious at all. It is most frequently mentioned by many of them as a meal they miss very much.

Bulgarian restaurants – selling “authenticity”

Bulgarian restaurants are crucial for the marketization of the national cuisine. Eating out is a main characteristic of urban culture; restaurants are not only economic phenomena, they are important social places, institutions – some authors even consider them a type of mass media (Girardeli 2004: 311). The me-

²⁰ Although some informants suspect that the owner is not officially allowed to sell such products and that this is why they are hidden indoors.

²¹ Informant A. R., born 1958, married to a Bulgarian.

diating function of “foreign” restaurants is intensified – they are mediators between “our” and “their” culture. Selling “authenticity”, Bulgarian restaurants reaffirm the image of Bulgarian food as “ethnic” and “exotic”. Such a label was attached to Bulgarian cuisine in other Western countries, too (Kassabova 2008). Which cuisine does and which does not get labelled “ethnic” (and “exotic”) in the frames of contemporary global culture is a problem for a separate study. What is clear is the fact that, especially in multicultural societies, the dominant cuisine is usually not considered “ethnic”.

As mentioned above, there is a considerable number of foreign restaurants in Munich and as a rule they are cheaper than German restaurants. The local public is very open to all kinds of experiments. In this context a Bulgarian restaurant is one of numerous options. For immigrants, going there is a way of celebrating national and religious feasts. The old restaurant “Sofia Grill” was closed several years ago because of the death of its famous owner. She also was a fugitive from communist rule and all the respondents remember her as a great cook and a nice person. She prepared a wonderful grill and she used to pander to visitors’ taste, making rare and cheap but beloved dishes such as hominy with cheese or cracklings. Because of the good food and low prices, many Germans working nearby used to go there for lunch. In the evening and especially on weekends it was impossible to go there without making a reservation. There is a big difference between this restaurant and the new one, “Rila”. People dislike it because of the high prices and bad service. Many complaints in this respect were registered. Problems arise because of some notorious practices, typical for restaurants in Bulgaria, which have been transferred to Germany. Students are not allowed to stay there if they order only French fries and Coca Cola. Oriental *chalga* music²² is played when most of the public is Bulgarian, but many people dislike this kind of music. When they politely asked to have it turned off, the waiter said that it was the music of the boss. Many respondents ceased going there precisely because of this music:

“I was at a party there and when this music started I could not stand it. My husband came to take me home (he is German) and I was ashamed, I went outside to meet him because I didn’t want him to see what was going on ... If this is Bulgaria, I am ashamed of it. This was the last time I went there.”²³

The most indicative example of transferring “bad Bulgarian practices” to Germany was an unsuccessful attempt at advertising the restaurant. The owner made

²² Oriental-style new folk music, very popular in Bulgaria.

²³ Informant V. P., born 1950.

a deal with the travel agency to attach leaflets to bus tickets, promising that whoever comes with this leaflet to the restaurant would receive a free beer. When people began asking for this beer, problems occurred. They were accused by the waiters of not saying in the beginning that they had such a leaflet. Logically enough, clients showed the leaflets while waiting for the bill. When the woman from the agency received complaints about this matter, she proposed that the waiters should ask in advance whether customers had such a leaflet or not. The owner disagreed, saying that he was not interested in them showing these leaflets at all, he was interested only in them paying big bills. This was the end of their common business.²⁴ It remains unclear why the owner started such an advertisement if he was not inclined to follow his own rules. Again the desire for quick and big money while avoiding regulations is one of the possible explanations.

The bad image of "Rila" is the reason why some people regularly visit the Croatian restaurant "Zagreb". Its cuisine is considered the same as in "Sofia Grill", and what is more, the chef there used to work with the late owner of the old Bulgarian restaurant. Older immigrants go to the "Zagreb" after Sunday liturgy in the Bulgarian church, but they visit "Rila" too, even though it is an expensive place. For a woman who migrated when she was very young and did not manage to cook the Bulgarian way, going to these restaurants for years has been her only contact with her native cuisine. It is interesting that her grandson is more capable of cooking certain Bulgarian dishes than she herself is.²⁵

Rituals and guests

The gradual diminution of usage of original products during the integration process into the host society has led to a slow decrease in the scope of Bulgarian dishes prepared at home. Many people "eat Bulgarian" predominantly in the "Rila" and "Zagreb" restaurants, which is rather expensive. At home only the most important cuisine, the festive one, is preserved as an integral part of the ritual system. Regardless of the extent of adaptation and socialization in German society, all first generation immigrants try to observe the key Orthodox feasts, Christmas and Easter, preparing appropriate ritual food. Usually original products brought from Bulgaria are kept especially for these events. Preparation of a table with an odd number of vegetarian dishes for Christmas Eve seems strange to Germans, "but I am still doing it because this is our tradition and I insist on following it, because I still consider myself Bulgarian".²⁶ Catholic and Orthodox

²⁴ Informant A. R., born 1958.

²⁵ Informant I. S., born 1925, immigrated 1947.

²⁶ Informant I. G., born 1964, living in Germany since 1992.

Easter are usually on different dates, and some immigrants celebrate the Catholic one (because the whole country has a holiday on this day), while others honour the Orthodox one. A few people celebrate both. This depends a lot on their family status and whether they have a German partner or not. Those celebrating the Catholic feast are still following culinary prescriptions of the Orthodox one.

Unexpectedly, many women prepare traditional Easter cakes, requiring hard kneading of the dough. Some of them only colour eggs red, a tradition which is almost forgotten in Bulgaria. In Germany it has been revived by immigrants of the first and second generations as a distinction from the local tradition of making multicoloured eggs: "My daughter (second generation migrant) is colouring the eggs in our family. Her boyfriend is German, but when I told her that our tradition is to colour red eggs only, she started doing it this way."²⁷ The same holds true for some of those who celebrate the Orthodox feast: "It was very difficult for me to explain to my children why there are no red eggs here in Germany. So I told them that we are Bulgarians, our Easter is not on that day and our eggs are red."²⁸ As an important part of the feast, ritual food is given distinctive meanings: it reaffirms and symbolizes not just religious, but even more, national identity (it is well known that both are interrelated). Another crucial emblem of Bulgarian identity is pastry with fortune slips inside, made for Christmas or New Year's Eve. Pastry sheets and cheese from Bulgaria are kept in the fridge for precisely this purpose. Rarely, in families with both Bulgarian partners, other Orthodox feasts with specific dishes like fish on St. Nicolas Day (6. 12.) and Annunciation (25. 3.) are celebrated. In some of these cases men are as good cooks as women. What is more, they transfer to Germany the old practices of making homemade brandy, wine, backed peppers, pickles, flat sausages, even honey. Some regional differences in the cooking of both partners are still preserved.²⁹

As a rule, Bulgarian dishes are made for foreign guests, especially Germans. This is so because "food does not simply symbolize social bonds and divisions, it participates in their creation and recreation" (Sutton 2001: 84). Giving and receiving food is always connected with social status, and important guests are given highly prestigious food (Fenton 1997: 154). It was not easy for the respondents to explain why this demonstration of identity through food was so important for them. It is a kind of public acknowledgment of their origins. Bulgarian food is "the only thing which is really good in Bulgaria, it was preserved for

²⁷ Informant R. P., born 1938.

²⁸ Informant I. N., born 1970, with a Bulgarian husband.

²⁹ "In Bulgaria there are 50 kilometres between my birthplace and his town, but there are differences in the cuisine. It is seen in a simple salad – it is different depending on who has made it – me or him" – informant I. N., born 1970.

centuries unspoiled – it is real, it is ours and it remains”³⁰. From a psycho-dynamic perspective food knowledge is very loaded emotionally, because it occurs in the passionate world of the small child.³¹ As stated above, such an emotional attitude towards tasty food is kept for a lifetime, and not only among migrants. In immigration it is often intensified or consciously diminished, depending on personal wishes and the respective level of integration into the host society. In both cases deliberate efforts are needed.

A similar emotional attitude towards Bulgarian food was found in the case of a young woman with a German father and Bulgarian mother. Her German identity is undeniable, she rarely cooks something Bulgarian at home, but for her wedding party she chose catering from the Bulgarian restaurant: “This was something that I wanted, it was important for me. It is an emotional tie, not identity. I bought my ring from Bulgaria, too. I wanted the wedding food to be special and to be connected with me.”³² While the informant herself denies that this was an expression of her national identity, it is obvious that Bulgarian food was an instrument of her self-revelation. This was a conscious (or maybe unconscious) emotional demonstration of her connection to Bulgaria. What is more, it was a symbolic presentation of her personal identity, not restricted in national terms only. Even if unique, this case is interesting because it reflects some tendencies typical for second-generation migrants, although the woman in question is hardly considered such. As a whole, hybrid cultural practices of the first generation migrants are valid for their children, too. For the woman mentioned above and for only one person of first generation migrants,³³ the concrete place of consumption makes food tasty, too. According to them, everything is tasty where it developed. That is why they enjoy Bulgarian food in Bulgaria, German food in Germany, etc. The playful switching of cultural contexts, accompanying spatial mobility, is important in this respect. In contrast with the majority of respondents, they do not esteem so highly the sensory aspects of transferred food – for them it is tasty in Bulgaria, because it is part of the whole cultural experience of going back there.³⁴

³⁰ Informant G. M., born 1973.

³¹ I wish to express my gratitude to Prof. Peter Black, George Mason University, for this comment and for his valuable help in editing this text.

³² Informant M. R., born 1971, with a German father and Bulgarian mother.

³³ A person quite open for all kinds of culinary experiments and foreign influences as a whole.

³⁴ “For me the place is important. I eat all these things in Bulgaria, here it is not right to say that I don’t like them, but for me they are in a way connected with Bulgaria. When I go there I eat them a lot and I like them. I eat cheese and yellow cheese and lyutenitsa with the unhealthy white bread. I carry all these products here, but it is simply not the same, I don’t know why. There I eat sausages, here I have one of them in my fridge for weeks. Here I

My data on second-generation migrants is partial and predominantly indirect, based on information provided by their parents, who were my key informants. Their culinary preferences correspond with worldwide tendencies of acquiring the majority food culture, but also maintain an interest in Bulgarian cuisine. The main difference from their parents is the fact that they like German dishes much more. At the same time they make some emblematic Bulgarian dishes, often consulting about recipes on the phone with their grandmothers in Bulgaria instead of their mothers in Germany. What is more, this is typical not only for women, but for men, too. This phenomenon needs separate study, but three possible explanations might be posed in advance. The first involves the need for “roots”, which is typical of the second-generation migrants even though they have adopted a new national affiliation. They are still considered citizens of migrant origin and the question of where their parents came from is still relevant. There are some cases when the lack of certain cultural competences, associated with their origin, cause serious identity crises.³⁵ The second explanation leads to sensory aspects of food. Maybe Bulgarian dishes are made because they are still found tasty by the second generation immigrants. They are part of the hybrid immigrant lifestyle, yet a secondary part, because these meals are made mostly for feasts, while everyday cuisine is German or international. The third option points to the “exoticism” of this food; in a postmodern context ethnic culture is found interesting (Featherstone 2007).

“Us” and “them” in food choices

It appears that the concept of taste is not only cultural, that it is not only acquired during acculturation. Obviously there are certain “objective” sensory qualities of Bulgarian vegetables, fruits, cheese, lyutenitsa, etc. because many Germans find them tasty as well. As a rule Germans and especially Bavarians are open to foreign culinary borrowings. Maybe this is due to the fact that German cuisine is not highly prestigious for Germans themselves, which is why they

can make a shopska salad for sure, but I don’t. And of course there are no such tomatoes here ...” – informant M. R., born 1971, with a German father and Bulgarian mother.

³⁵ Quite interesting is the case of two sisters. The older one had lived in Bulgaria till she was 12 years old, when their parents migrated to Germany, while the younger was born there, and when going to school, almost all her classmates were of migrant origin. She knew that she was Bulgarian, but she knew almost nothing about Bulgaria, so it was very hard for her to “prove” her origin. As a result an identity crisis occurred, and it coincided with her adolescent identity crisis: “I know pretty well who I am, but she doesn’t. She was told that she was Bulgarian, but she doesn’t feel so, because she never lived there” – informant L. K. (the older sister), born 1978 in Sofia, married to a German.

easily borrow foreign cookery and the number of ethnic restaurants, especially in Bavaria, is very high. On the other hand, "if you are married to an Italian or a French guy you will not be allowed to make even a simple Bulgarian pastry, because Italian and French cuisines are famous and considered best".³⁶

Bavarians are very adaptive in accepting some Bulgarian culinary methods, too. For example, all the neighbours of the owner of the travel agency started baking peppers:

"I bake about 30–40 kilos of peppers every autumn. I supplied all my German neighbours with Bulgarian devices for baking peppers and in September we all bake together. We import about 100 kilograms of peppers from Bulgaria with the bus and I give to each of them 10 kilos and our whole block of flats bakes peppers. I taught them how to do it. When I started baking they smelled the aroma and came to ask me what was I doing. I gave them a taste, they liked it a lot and I started giving them 5–6 kilos. In the beginning one of them was suspicious about the electric device, he was not sure that it was safe and well done, but then he understood that it was OK and now he is baking normally too. After baking they continue with putting peppers into marinade according their traditions, I simply freeze them."³⁷

As stated above, most Bulgarians dislike German cuisine. They rarely visit German restaurants, and most of them have not included German dishes in their home menu. Bavarian meals are considered too heavy, while local ecological production is regarded as a commercial trick. There are some rare cases of adopting one or two German dishes, but mostly international influences were registered: women cooking Italian, French and Chinese meals. Some German deserts are highly esteemed, but again controversial opinions were registered.³⁸ The level of compromise with the local cuisine and conversely of sticking to Bulgarian recipes depends largely on the identity of the marital partner. As Klaus Roth has convincingly shown, food is an object of serious negotiations and even conflicts in bi-cultural marriages (Roth 2004, 2006). That is why Bulgarian women with German

³⁶ I am grateful to Prof. Juliana Roth for this comment.

³⁷ Informant A. R., born 1958.

³⁸ "Our sweets have nothing to do with theirs. I enjoy very much receiving syringes [Bulg. tulumbichki, Oriental sweets with sugar syrup] from Bulgaria. A Ukrainian woman made once a 'Napoleon' cake and told me 'Come and taste it, you are the only one to understand how great this cake is. Whoever German I gave it to, they always don't like it'. Wherever you go, even in their most expensive sweet shops, our garash cake is not there ..." – informant Y. R., married to a German husband.

husbands cook more internationally (although not with many German dishes) in comparison to those married to Bulgarians or other Balkan men.

There is a cultural difference in the very concept of cooking typical of Bulgarian and German cuisines. For Bulgarians food and eating are very important elements of everyday life, associated with social contacts, etc. (Krăsteva-Blagoeva 2001). "In Bulgaria eating is very important. Me and my sister, when we go to visit our parents, even before we go there they ask us in advance what do we want them to cook for us."³⁹ It is a question of prestige for guests to be stuffed with food. As a German wife of a Bulgarian man said, "The first Bulgarian word I knew when I went to Bulgaria was 'eat, please'"⁴⁰. For Bulgarians eating is an inevitable part of communication – all conversations are made around the table and sometimes people eat only because they have to talk with their friends or relatives. They stay around the table for hours, pausing for smoking. According to several Bulgarian respondents, the German way of eating is quite different. It almost excludes personal communication: people are sitting at the table only to have their meal with no conversation. They eat quickly and hurry to do something else. Three Bulgarian daughters-in-law (one of them with a German father) report feeling uneasy when having meals with their German husband's parents because of this. Because of scarce and indirect information on the matter, it is not possible to estimate whether this is due to social status (the families mentioned are of peasant background) or is due to German upbringing and discipline, presupposing that eating is not to be mixed with other activities. What is important is that the consciousness of this fact is viewed as an important cultural difference between Bulgarians and Germans.

Another distinction is the fact that being very "modern", many Germans have abandoned cooking completely. That is why they enjoy being treated:

"We have many German friends. All of them like to come to our place and to eat something fresh and homemade, because they themselves do not cook at all. Even a mother with two children does not make anything for them, only prefabricated frozen things."⁴¹

Because many Bulgarians still spend time on cooking, an image of Bulgarian cuisine as "traditional" or "pre-modern" is established. It corresponds with the advertising strategies of some Bulgarian restaurants in other Western countries, for instance, the 'Pleven' restaurant in Vienna (Kassabova 2008). The very idea of "fast" and "slow" cooking has changed. For instance, some of the simplest dishes like stuffed peppers are perceived by the migrants as difficult and time-

³⁹ Informant K. G., born 1975 in Sofia, married to a German.

⁴⁰ Informant K. M., born 1974 in Plovdiv.

⁴¹ Informant K. G., born 1975 in Sofia, married to a German.

consuming, which is why they prepare them for special occasions. This is due also to the fact that German peppers are too stiff, so they need preliminary blanching in order to be cooked well.

Many migrants do not like stuffing themselves with food, which is typical of Bulgarian nutritional behaviour. Sometimes they eat very little for a few weeks before coming back to Bulgaria. There are two types of reaction in this respect. Middle-aged people with more conservative orientations are doing this because they know that they are going to eat a lot and they like doing so. They associate going to Bulgaria with eating a lot and eating tasty food. Young women, on the other hand, do not like eating too much, and they also do not share their mothers' habit of cooking for hours. Of course they enjoy common meals the first one or two days of their visit, but later they get bored. Yet boredom does not prevent them from the inevitable carrying of food to Germany. This is due to the taste of traditional Bulgarian products. It is illustrative that a young girl, watching TV at home in Munich, was given a piece of cucumber from behind by her mother. Not seeing what it was and still watching the screen, she took one bite and said "This is a Bulgarian cucumber".

* * *

The interconnection of food, taste and identity became obvious in this research. Because of the emotional, sensory and mnemonic effects of the consumption of native food, carrying food items from Bulgaria is crucial for immigrants' nutritional practices. Their constant search for the "original" taste evokes "returning to the whole" experiences of different strength and depth. It appeared that not only does taste encode memories of birthplace: "Eating these meals makes you feel at home"⁴², but in some cases it is the opposite: the place of consumption makes the food tasty. Eating is a crucial part of both cultural contexts the migrants are living in. Their constant transition between here and there, "living here and dreaming of there", not knowing for sure where home is, is encoded in their food preferences and practices. Even when trying to suppress them for the sake of integration, they are still there. Different levels of their preservation and demonstration depend on the social and marital status of the immigrants. The intensity of their ties with the home country, especially with parents and grandparents, is also an important variable in accounting for the differences found in this sample, although there are some cases in which such ties have weakened but nostalgic food preferences are still alive. The continued consumption of ritual food and the conscious treating of foreign guests to Bulgarian dishes reflect the

⁴² Informant G. M., born 1973.

potentials of food as an instrument of self-revelation, deliberate or involuntary. The contrast between Bulgarian and German attitudes towards cooking and eating results in an active cultural exchange. In its frames Germans borrow much more Bulgarian practices than vice versa. As a whole, as people change their cuisine as part of the assimilation process, they tend to preserve, albeit to different extents, their attitudes to food, cooking and eating.

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Zur sprachlichen Leistung von Migrantenkindern aus Südosteuropa nach dem bayerischen Modell der „Sprachlernklassen“ an deutschen Grundschulen

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Abstract: On the language acquisition of children of Southeast European migrants taught after the model of "language learning classes" at German primary schools

The paper presents the results of a research project on the language performance of elementary school children in Bavaria, Germany. Its aim was to evaluate the school model of the "Sprachlernklassen" (language learning classes) or nowadays "Deutschlerngruppen" (German language learning groups) and to answer questions concerning the language improvement of the children, especially of children with migrant backgrounds from Southeast Europe.

Die Migrationsthematik hat derzeit enorme Konjunktur, weil sie mit weitreichenden soziostrukturellen und politischen Veränderungen der Weltgesellschaft zusammenhängt und im Zeichen der Globalisierung neue Züge annimmt. Der Begriff der Migration hat seine Wurzeln im lateinischen Wort „migrare“ (wandern, wegziehen) beziehungsweise „migratio“ (Wanderung). Er hat sich in den letzten Jahren, beeinflusst durch das weltweit verwendete englische Wort „migration“, zumindest in der sozialwissenschaftlich geprägten Fach-, zum Teil aber auch in der („politisch korrekten“) deutschen Alltagssprache eingebürgert (vgl. Han 2005).

Mit der soziologischen Auseinandersetzung mit diesem Phänomen hat sich erst Treibel (1988) befasst. Sie bezieht sich auf unterschiedliche Aspekte, um den allgemeinen Begriff der Migration präziser zu fassen (2003: 18 f.). So werden bei den verschiedenen Typen von Migration folgende Aspekte unterschieden:

- der *räumliche* Aspekt unterscheidet zwischen Binnenwanderung und internationaler Wanderung,
- der *zeitliche* Aspekt zwischen temporärer und dauerhafter Wanderung,
- der *kausale* Aspekt, bezüglich der Wanderungsursache, zwischen freiwilliger Wanderung und Zwangswanderung und
- der *quantitative* Aspekt hinsichtlich des Umfangs der Migration zwischen Einzel-, Gruppen- und Massenwanderung.