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Gastronomic Literature, Modern Cuisine and the Development of French Bourgeois Identity from 1800 to 1850

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**Gastronomic Literature, Modern Cuisine and the Development of French Bourgeois
Identity from 1800 to 1850**

An Honors Thesis
Presented by
Jane Thompson

To
The Department of History
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
Honors in the Major Field

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Preface

Nineteenth-century France was a time of tremendous change as the prosperous middle class, the bourgeoisie, emerged by forming strong social, political, and cultural identities. By 1850, the bourgeoisie was already an identifiable and powerful social class. Though it grew to be powerful due to a combination of factors, one unmistakable way that a common bourgeois identity emerged was through cultural practices and rituals. More specifically, one way that this group identity was strengthened was through changing attitudes towards eating and dining, and the creation of modern cuisine.

The food culture of the Ancien Régime, prior to the French Revolution of 1789, was dominated by traditional cuisine where food was closely tied to regional communities. As a direct reflection of the class divisions of the time, the elites ate luxuriously as they could afford to have quality ingredients brought into their homes for elaborate feasts, and the peasants ate locally off of what they could afford to grow. Modern cuisine, a more national and centralized cuisine, began to develop after the Revolution and took form in the mid-nineteenth century. It emerged from a series of factors which include the growing number of cafés and restaurants, the abolition of guilds and the increase in job opportunities for chefs and caterers, and the rise of Paris as the social and economic epicenter of France. Modern cuisine as a set of recipes and cooking techniques was a significant modern achievement for nineteenth-century France.

Three men in particular, Antonin Carême, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin and Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de la Reynière, and the pieces of gastronomic literature that they published, created the domain for modern cuisine to take shape. As groundbreakers in their own right, all three men were pivotal in creating the art of food writing and bringing their expertise to

the public. Beyond culinary know-how, they also claimed to be masters of an “aesthetic” of eating which they wished to impart through their writing.

Carême’s role as a private pastry chef and caterer to some of the most elite clientele at the turn of the nineteenth century (including Talleyrand and Baron Rothschild) gave him credibility but also a unique vantage point. He had access to elite culture, and yet his books *Le Pâtissier royal parisien* and *L’Art de la Cuisine Française au XIXème siècle* were intended for larger audiences. Grimod de la Reynière’s yearly journal *Almanach des gourmands* helped to redefine the term “gourmand” from insinuating gluttonous behavior to meaning a refined appreciation for food. Including reviews of Parisian vendors, descriptions of products and whimsy poems, the newsletter was devoted to bringing credibility to food lovers. His eccentric writing style which often times mocked aristocratic behavior and protocol made his works approachable and made him favored amongst the bourgeoisie. Originally a lawyer, Brillat-Savarin became more well-known for founding the genre of food writing with his *Physiologie du goût*. Through his book’s unique scientific approach, the author analyzes the history of how people consume food, and how all people have the right to appreciate good quality food. All three men simultaneously reconstructed standards of good taste at the turn of the nineteenth century both in terms of actual ingredients and especially in regards to the new “manners” and ways that people ate.

Through this paper I will analyze the works of these three men as lenses through which to study the creation of modern cuisine, the emergence of a bourgeois identity and the evolution of a modern nationalism in the first half of nineteenth-century France.

Introduction:

The French Revolution of 1789 and the Emergence of the Bourgeoisie as one Social and Political Entity

An Examination of the Causes of the Revolution of 1789 and the Restructuring of Social Class in Post-Revolutionary France

In order to better understand the changing role of the bourgeoisie as a social and political entity in early nineteenth-century France, it is essential to describe the manner in which such a class evolved at the end of the eighteenth century. Historians have long debated, and continue to debate, the origins and dynamics of the bourgeoisie and whether or not it evolved out of the Revolution or took shape in the nineteenth century. In his book *Quatre-vingt-neuf*, Georges Lefebvre famously argued the Marxist position that the Revolution brought about the end of the feudal system and ushered in the rise of the bourgeoisie. Other twentieth century historians like Alfred Cobban and François Furet have adopted revisionist views in explaining the Revolution. Cobban contests Lefebvre and his supporters and questions the school of thought that the Revolution resulted in the rise of the bourgeoisie and the transition to capitalism. Cobban argued, rather, that the state of the peasants and urban poor remained basically unchanged as a result of the Revolution, making the event less of a social uprising and more of a political time of transition. Alexis de Tocqueville critiqued the role of the bourgeoisie during the Revolution in his book *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (The Old Regime and the Revolution, 1856). De Tocqueville “saw in the Revolution primarily the substitution of one despotic sovereignty for another...his fundamental criticism of the Revolution was that it was not revolutionary enough,

that it merely accepted and continued the process of reducing individual liberties and building up the power of the centralized state, which had already progressed far before 1789.”¹ Echoing the age old aphorism that “history repeats itself,” de Tocqueville essentially argued that the French fell back into a pattern of central government and regression except with the bourgeoisie at the head of the government instead of the monarchy. He thought that the philosophes of the eighteenth century played a crucial role in turning public opinion against the monarchy. The Revolution, for de Tocqueville, thus provided the ground for the bourgeoisie to emerge and establish a more centralized form of power. Regardless of the differing opinions on the origins and outcomes of the Revolution, though, it is certain that the French Revolution drastically shaped the patterns and events of the nineteenth and even twentieth century in France and Western Europe.

Defending the Marxist ideology, historian Georges Lefebvre argued that the main cause of the Revolution was the rise of the bourgeoisie. In his *Origins of the French Revolution*, William Doyle explicates Lefebvre’s ideology and describes some of the differing opinions which scholars have projected in their respective works. Originally published in 1939, *Quatre-vingt-neuf* was banned by the Vichy government in France for a number of years. It eventually became an indelible study of the Revolution after it was translated into English by Robert R. Palmer in 1947 under the title *The Coming of the French Revolution: 1789*. In it, Lefebvre argues that 1789 was a pivotal time in which the bourgeoisie took over “after several centuries of growing numbers and wealth.”² He claims that medieval society had been ruled by an aristocracy that gained power and wealth from the land. Gradually, in the eighteenth century, the

¹ Alfred Cobban, *Aspects of the French Revolution*, New York: George Braziller Inc., 1968, 41.

² William Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, 7.

bourgeoisie emerged because new forms of wealth were becoming available and they were becoming empowered by new philosophical thought.

Palmer prefaces his translation by stating that the Revolution created some pivotal paradoxes for the modern world: “The Revolution liberated the individual and it consolidated the modern state...it cleared the way for the triumph of capitalism, and inspired the socialism that was to subvert it...it based society on the institution of private property, but also on the human rights of the average man.”³ And perhaps most importantly, Palmer points out, “the greatest tensions of modern society result from telling all human beings that they enjoy the same rights, while in fact they do not participate equally in the good things of life.”⁴ In other words, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, one of the most profound products of the Revolution, had inherent contradictions. The document defined the rights of men as universal irrespective of social class, and yet failed to include that those rights extended to women or to enslaved people. Beyond that, it also excluded men who did not own property (all citizens were able to partake in the legislative process aside from the property-less). Palmer’s point about the inherent contradictions of the Revolution is a dilemma which will be revisited throughout this thesis.

Lefebvre saw the Revolution as a necessary vehicle for bringing about an end to the preexisting aristocratic structure of the Old Regime. He suggests that all social classes were in some way responsible for the Revolution’s coming to fruition, thus rejecting the notion that it stemmed from small bands of middle-class rebels. He argues that the peasantry accounted for an often overlooked force in the Revolution, as they comprised nearly four-fifths of the population.

³ Georges Lefebvre, R. R. Palmer translation, *The Coming of the French Revolution, 1789*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947, v-vi.

⁴ Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution, 1789*, v-vi.

In French society in the late 1770s, most income and wealth was in some way tied to land or property, and the “social position of the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie and the town laboring classes was defined largely by their relation to the rural population.”⁵ The strong presence of the peasant class, and more importantly, the way in which all the social classes joined forces in retaliation against the Bourbon monarchy is essentially, according to Lefebvre, the defining characteristic of the Revolution.

The writings of Rousseau, Voltaire and others like them did not “cause” the Revolution, which arose from a perfectly definite series of concrete political events; but the Revolution, once started, expressed itself in the broad conceptions of eighteenth century thought, in which “man” was the fundamental reality, with all classes, nations and races of merely secondary importance.”⁶

The rise in power of the bourgeoisie came from their increased political power. The Revolution, he thought, was in actuality the result of a series of political events, but the way in which the bourgeoisie rose to and maintained power was the result of a century’s long evolution of the definition of rights of man and individuality.⁷

François Furet and Denis Richet, two other noted French scholars of the Revolution, elaborate on the political rise of the bourgeoisie in their work *French Revolution*. The authors highlight an often overlooked chapter of the French Revolution, the Directory. Consisting of a body of five Directors, two Councils and various local authorities, the Directory was set in place in accordance with the Constitution of 1795 and ended with Napoleon Bonaparte’s coup-d’état (the coup of 18 Brumaire) in 1799.⁸ Furet and Richet highlight the flaws that plagued this transitional government. Within the Directory lay differing opinions on the direction of the Republic and a struggle for power that was reflective of aristocrats in the pre-revolutionary

⁵ Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution: 1789*, xiv-xv.

⁶ Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution: 1789*, xvi.

⁷ Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution: 1789*, xiii-xvii.

⁸ François Furet and Denis Richet, *French Revolution*, New York: Macmillan, 1970, 266.

Ancien Régime. The Directory became a loathed entity amongst the middle classes as the Directors abused their power.

The office of deputy...was no longer being sought for the same motives that had inspired the earlier assemblies. It was regarded as a position of advantage to be obtained by devious means, a stepping-stone to wealth rather than glory. As the moral ideas of the Revolution grew weaker they were replaced by materialist ideas.⁹

Among the phases of the Revolution, the Deputy is overlooked because, according to the authors, it cannot be directly associated with an iconic figurehead like Robespierre and the Convention and Napoleon and the Consulate. For whatever reason, though, this phase of the Revolution marks an important foreshadowing for the bourgeoisie over the next few decades. Its failure highlights the complicated nature of conflict within the middle class. The unpopularity of the Directory led to the resurgence of Royalists and eventually Napoleon's coup d'état. This phase of the Revolution highlights the shifting nature of the political role of the middle class in the French government.

In *Aspects of the French Revolution*, Alfred Cobban discusses at length the various approaches that scholars have taken in an attempt to pinpoint the causes of the Revolution. The mere fact that Cobban uses almost forty pages to summarize the thoughts and opinions of noted scholars on the era demonstrates not only the varied opinions but also the fact that there is no one dominant interpretation. The two general branches of thought held by modern-day historians can be classified as either Marxist, which "portrayed the Revolution as bringing about the final, and much delayed ending of the feudal system," versus a theory that sees the origins of the Revolution as more ideological and political rather than socio-economic in nature.¹⁰ Whether the events leading up to the storming of the Bastille in 1789 stemmed from economic, political,

⁹ Furet and Richet, *French Revolution*, 269.

¹⁰ Roger Price, *A Concise History of France*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 79.

sociological, religious or even random causes, one thing is for sure: there is no one single cause for the outbreak of the Revolution. Regardless of why the Revolution came about, it is clear that the bourgeoisie emerged as a commanding force both socially and politically at its conclusion.

The years between 1789 and 1794 were characterized by complicated tensions and competition between the deteriorating monarchy and the nobles, “who in practice had shared political power with the monarchy through their quasi-monopoly of office holding... [and who sought] equal rights of access to political power.”¹¹ France in the Ancien Régime was divided into three estates, the first constituting the clergy, the second the nobility and the third the commoners. At the Estates-General held on May 5, 1789, discontented representatives of the Third Estate laid out a plan of reform. On May 27, Abbé Sieyès (a clergyman who represented the Third Estate) presented to the assembly his essay which called for creating commonality amongst the three Estates. After the king rejected proposal, the *Communes* (the renamed Third Estate) declared themselves as a separate entity called the National Assembly.¹² The growing discontentment of the popular class came to a head at this point, leading to a string of revolts and finally the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789. After the outbreak of the Revolution and eventually the decree of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen on August 26th 1789, the restructuring process began.¹³

The basic ideals of popular sovereignty and elective representative government were recognised by a law of 14 December 1789. It stipulated that deputies and officials were to be elected by ‘active’ citizens, those paying the equivalent of three days labour in taxes. The poorest, propertyless members of society, who lacked the independence thought to be a prerequisite for voting, were to be excluded.¹⁴

¹¹ Price, *A Concise History of France*, 97.

¹² Price, *A Concise History of France*, 94-101.

¹³ Price, *A Concise History of France*, 98-101.

¹⁴ Price, *A Concise History of France*, 105.

The proceeding series of events (abolition of the monarchy, the Terror, etc.) were all vital moments in the history of the Revolution. But it is not the intricacies of the Revolution which are most relevant to this paper. It is instead the way that the structure and influence of social classes prior to and at the conclusion of the event evolved and changed. Of course, there are certain marked moments at which it becomes crucial to have a rudimentary understanding of the course of the Revolution. But what is more important is the fact that the bourgeoisie emerged from it as a powerful political entity – not so much how they established this authority. The tensions of the Revolution should not be underestimated, but it is most important to know the outcome and thus the starting point of the emergence of the early nineteenth-century bourgeoisie.

Defining Terms: What it meant to be “bourgeois” after the Revolution

The fact that so many scholars have written their own interpretations of the causes and consequences of the Revolution emphasizes the need for students of the Revolution to read about the past with a critical eye. In his book *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie*, David Garrioch attempts to examine the use and abuse of the word *bourgeois* throughout the discourse on the Revolution. He compares the contemporary (or twenty-first century) definition of the word to the *bourgeoisie* as it was referred to around 1800. He asserts:

There was no Parisian bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century. There were merchants and lawyers, teachers, manufacturers, rentiers, *bourgeois de Paris*. But they did not form a united or a citywide class, did not possess the cross-city ties and identity that would make

them truly Parisian. The political and social institutions of the city served to fragment rather than unite the middle classes.¹⁵

In a technical sense, the term *bourgeois* at the end of the eighteenth century “designated a person who had citizen rights within a particular city, and thus applied to most master artisans.”¹⁶ It was only used to refer to someone who inhabited a town and was not yet used to describe a broad social class that existed somewhere between the nobility and the peasant classes. Garrioch argues that the eighteenth century provided the framework by which the bourgeoisie was able to emerge as a powerful entity during and after the Revolution. This could be attributed to the “ideology of domesticity... [as well as] a belief that property, virtue, and talent, rather than birth, should be the basis for privilege and advancement.”¹⁷ He argues further that it was under the Empire and Restoration that the bourgeoisie “formed the citywide identity that was needed to mobilize it politically and transform it into a class.”¹⁸

Politically, the middle class emerged as a unified and powerful entity during the course of the Revolution for numerous reasons. Garrioch claims that, “to some degree...the Revolution divorced political power from economic power and from local nobility, a trend reinforced in the Year II by the centralization of authority.”¹⁹ After the Revolution, there arose more ways for the middle class to participate in government both at the local and state levels. Doyle adds that the Revolution provided “representative institutions” through which the bourgeoisie could gain political representation. He argues that despite the political turmoil and bloodshed, the Revolution had some redeeming qualities for the infrastructure of the government. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen and the decree of August 11 which abolished

¹⁵ David Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie: 1690-1830*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996, 1.

¹⁶ Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie*, 4.

¹⁷ Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie*, 2.

¹⁸ Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie*, 2.

¹⁹ Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie*, 189.

feudalism were crucial in ensuring the permanent obliteration of despotic rule.²⁰ Thus the Revolution was successful because it broke down the old order and, from a political standpoint, gave the bourgeoisie more power and representation. Internal conflict still abounded, though, and as a class, the bourgeoisie remained far from being characterized by a common “identity” until some thirty years later.

In his analysis of what it meant to be bourgeois at the turn of the nineteenth century, Doyle starts by asserting that they were socially distinguishable from nobles; they were “non-noble, comfortably off, living mostly in towns.”²¹ The pre-Revolutionary bourgeoisie on the other hand was distinguishable from that entity which grew more centralized and powerful throughout the course of the Revolution:

They [the eighteenth century bourgeoisie] had no class consciousness...they did not see themselves as a distinct social group with its own interests, its own values, and its own way of life which it found superior to those of other groups...the ultimate aspiration of most members of the bourgeoisie was to become noble, and for the most part bourgeois values were more-or-less pale imitations of noble ones.²²

Doyle concentrates on factors that contribute towards defining whether or not a family was bourgeois. Since the lines that demarcated these social groups were so blurred building up to the Revolution, bourgeois families were at times only marginally distinguishable between those of the peasant and noble classes. Varying degrees of wealth which stemmed from varying occupations played a key role in defining status. The main distinction was between men who worked manually (which was more similar to peasant lifestyles) and tradesmen (a more distinguishable job).²³ In addition to commercial traders, there also existed a non-commercial bourgeoisie which included lawyers, office-holders and *rentiers*. The latter enjoyed the most

²⁰ Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, 204-211.

²¹ Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, 129.

²² Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, 130.

²³ Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, 130.

prestige amongst the sub-groups of the bourgeoisie, but most tried to gain social distinction by investing in land. Once again, power and status was ultimately tied to the amount of property one owned and the level of manual effort involved in one's occupation.²⁴

Throughout the course of the Revolution, power shifted to include fewer opportunities for the general public to participate at the local level, and governing powers were concentrated into central agencies. "...The growth of central agencies based in Paris produced an enormous expansion in the bureaucracy, from some 670 employed in the various ministries in the 1780s to at least 13,000 government officials by 1795."²⁵ Garrioch explains that over time, the bourgeois "democratic" government became increasingly centralized and bureaucratic (and thus reminiscent of the pre-Revolutionary monarchical government). Through the ebbs and flows of the post-Revolutionary period, Garrioch asserts, there arose a varied definition of the "post-revolutionary elite." Despite their varying financial security or occupations, the early nineteenth-century bourgeoisie all shared what he calls "geographic mobility," (244). The Revolution allowed for people to detach from their local environments. They were freed from their land literally because more economic opportunities arose for them than were available in the feudal system. Further, bourgeois men were also able to develop skills that were transferrable across geographic boundaries. Local family connections started to matter less after the disintegration of the old monarchical model, and men could gain authority or become prosperous in a variety of new ways. Post-revolutionary Paris saw:

people without local roots suddenly [rising] to prominence, buying up church property, establishing businesses to respond to new government and consumer demand, [and] moving in to fill the widening ranks of state employment...Above all, it was the state,

²⁴ Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, 131-138. (Note: Women, servants, the young and the poor and property-less were still excluded from participating in local politics and had no control over their social standing - it was determined for them).

²⁵ Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie*, 213.

created by the Revolution, that acted as midwife for the new local elite: providing employment and encouragement for industry; showering honors on men of science and of property closing off the way to political participation and admitting the few to favor and influence.²⁶

Historian Carol E. Harrison mirrors this sentiment (judgment) of the importance of geography in identity construction for the bourgeoisie in her book *The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth-Century France*. Harrison explores the elusive nature of the bourgeoisie and points out that the creation of the bourgeois man varied from region to region, which made it difficult for a national bourgeois identity to develop.

Being bourgeois always came with a geographical qualifier—a man could only be bourgeois of a certain town. His status as bourgeois meant that he possessed moral qualities that suited him for local leadership. Hence the bourgeoisie was always locally specific but also flexible: the subjective and performative nature of bourgeois identity meant that the category did not describe a static and fixed group of people... The cultural practices that constituted bourgeois identity did not lend themselves to the creation of a definitive list describing who was, and was not, bourgeois. They did, however, guide individuals through the post-revolutionary hierarchies of the communities in which they lived.²⁷

Here Harrison makes a unique distinction: bourgeois identity was not homogeneous nation-wide, at least at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Identity was still strongly regionalized and men who held local leadership positions took on a regional identity rather than a “national” French identity.

The emerging early nineteenth-century bourgeoisie was thus incredibly dynamic, and most importantly ever-evolving. A new governmental structure gave them opportunities to become both more politically involved and economically prosperous. As Garrioch states, the Revolution turned Paris into a “giant cauldron” (244) in which a mixed population continued to evolve for decades into the nineteenth century.

²⁶ Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie*, 244.

²⁷ Carol E. Harrison, *The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth Century France: Gender, Sociability, and the Uses of Emulation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 14.

The meanings and social implications for the term *bourgeois* have been repeatedly reinterpreted by scholars of French history. The latter half of the twentieth century was met with a renewed interest in discovering the origins of the French Revolution by scholars worldwide. Garrioch is but one of many who has attempted to define the term *bourgeois* and contribute to the debate over whether or not the French Revolution was in fact a revolution of the bourgeoisie. Some scholars have argued against the idea that the Revolution marked the rise of the bourgeoisie, claiming instead that eighteenth-century French society was divided between “elites” and “people,” between elite and popular culture.²⁸ For the sake of this thesis, I will defend the position that the bourgeoisie was a social class that began taking shape during the Revolution and gained political, economic and social power in the thirty or so years following its conclusion. It cannot be stressed enough, however, that the bourgeoisie developed gradually and experienced periods of increased and decreased power. At the turn of the nineteenth century, though, it was a strong force in the makeup of French society.

²⁸ Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie*, 5.

Part I: Shifting Attitudes towards Eating in the Post-Revolutionary Period

Modern Cuisine and Culture-Building

Having explored various theories concerning the origins of the bourgeoisie during the French Revolution, it is now possible to have a better grasp of the complexities in the construction of the bourgeoisie as a political and cultural entity in the wake of the Revolution. The instability of the government throughout the Revolution, the establishment of the Directory in 1795 and its eventual collapse with the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1799 made for two decades of political unpredictability. If the foundations of the new Republic were skewed to favor the land-owning middle class, then it is fair to say that the “nation” only included a specific group of French citizens. This idea of nationhood and the emergence of the creation of an “identity” as “citizen” that was different from the general term “people” prior to the Revolution was new uncharted and complicated territory. So how did this emerging middle class come to be so dominant to the extent that its qualities (both social and political) became characteristic of French “nationhood” and national identity? Further, how did cuisine become linked to the rise of the bourgeoisie and did a “national” cuisine develop at the beginning of the nineteenth century?

During the Ancien Régime, prior to the Revolution of 1789, traditional cuisine dominated. The upper class, a small percentage of the population, could afford to transport food to their homes so they ate in the lap of luxury. Peasants depended largely upon the resources of the land, so cuisine varied from region to region (for example there were hundreds of different ways to make a cassoulet, depending on the available meats and vegetables). A direct parallel

can be drawn between traditional cuisine, where food varied regionally, and the separation and tension amongst classes during the Ancien Régime:

In contrast with the Ancien Régime, which coupled cuisine and class, nineteenth-century France tied cuisine to country...Cuisine supplied one building block – a crucial one – for a national identity in the making, for it encouraged the French to see themselves through this distinctive lens as both different and superior.²⁹

In her book *Accounting for Taste*, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson argues that modern cuisine, which took shape in the early nineteenth century, played a key role in unifying the French people. The new set of techniques and recipes helped to unify people from different regions; by creating a more “nationalistic” cuisine, a French “national” identity was formed.

But what did French “nationalism” mean in 1800? I would argue that in order to promote an identity and way of life that was unique and separate from the traditions of the monarchy and the aristocracy, the middle classes became united by adopting a distinct set of manners and social attitudes in both their private and public lives. One arena wherein they constructed and enforced this set of manners was around the table. The creation and restructuring of such institutions as cafés, restaurants, menus, techniques, and *texts about food* allowed French cuisine to evolve in the nineteenth century to become accessible and malleable in the hands of this newly food-conscious bourgeoisie. This thesis will argue that three men in particular and the works that they published were greatly, if not entirely, responsible for engaging the population and inspiring the nation to be proud of a uniquely French cuisine. Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, Antonin Carême and Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de la Reynière and their works provide an excellent framework through which to examine the shift in cuisine and the creation of modern cuisine in the first half of the nineteenth century in France.

²⁹ Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: the Triumph of French Cuisine*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004, 5-7.

The language used and the *mélange* of new and old techniques in the works of these men set them apart from other texts written at the time. The very content of their texts was revolutionary, as no one before them had written so intricately and with such fervor about food and manners of eating. But upon reading these texts, the modern-day historian cannot help but question - "Who were they writing for?" And not only that, but "Why should it matter?" As I examine the intricacies of the evolving boundaries and levels of inclusion and exclusion in early nineteenth-century French society, I hope to determine how men such as Brillat-Savarin, Grimod de la Reynière and Carême interpreted the "universal rights of man." I hope to understand how they saw society evolving around them in the wake of the Revolution. As each man was born into a different social class (middle, upper and lower classes respectively), I wonder whether their social backgrounds had a strong influence on both their interests in gastronomy and their desires to publish material to educate people. Perhaps the authors wrote with the intentions of appealing to a specific target audience, or perhaps they wrote in hopes of finding a larger, broader and newer audience. And if they were trying to reach a broader audience, in what ways did the manners and aesthetic that their books promoted influence a common "culture" or "identity" to which this group could relate? I aim to prove that they were writing for a newly developing bourgeoisie and in the process of publishing these manuals, they were contributing towards the process of molding a set of bourgeois manners and attitudes which they also considered uniquely French.

As a matter of context, the works I will examine span two eras in French history: the Napoleonic Era between 1799 and 1815 and the Restoration period from 1815 to 1830. My study will focus less on the political changes of the era (though that is not to say that they were insignificant), and more on the construction of a social identity for the emerging bourgeoisie. I

will analyze the reasons for which these authors and gastronomes decided to write their texts, what they deemed to be important in the world of cookery, and their intended audiences. Through this process, I hope to determine whether or not they wrote with the intention of appealing to a group of people that they called the “bourgeoisie” or if they subconsciously created a set of manners that later came to define that social class.

Carême is often referred to as the father and “inventor” of modern French cuisine. Not only did he make his mark by creating some of the most practical and popular sauces, but his techniques and methods were groundbreaking. Ferguson ponders how a character like Carême could have inspired what she calls a “culinary nationalism:”

[Carême’s] culinary discourse insisted upon the intimate, indissoluble bond between cuisine and country. This culinary system...gave [the] French...a means of imagining their country as a community that brought together producers and consumers who were geographically dispersed, socially stratified, and politically divided. Like the gastronomic map that represented France as an assemblage of culinary particulars, Carême’s cuisine assigned particular dishes tied to people and places to the incomparably greater whole of French culture.³⁰

Ferguson proposes an interesting assertion – that Carême was responsible for the construction of a French “culinary nationalism” that unified people across different regions and social strata. Though I believe that modern cuisine (which evolved in the years following the publication of Carême’s text) effectively unified French people and promoted a national identity, I wonder whether or not Carême was even trying to appeal to a national audience at the time that he was writing his text. Perhaps the authors considered the elite and noblest bourgeoisie to be the epicenter of French society. To them, this emerging elite bourgeoisie was the essence of France itself; so perhaps when they were trying to appeal to “all” people, they imagined the bourgeoisie as the essence of French “national” identity.

³⁰ Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, 81.

In a time period as transient as the first half of the nineteenth century, Brillat-Savarin, Grimod de la Reynière and Carême's works stand out as critical lenses through which historians can analyze shifting ideas of identity, national pride and equal rights. Definitions for social "classes", "culture," and "identity" remained vastly vague at the time. But without these gastronomic texts, there would not have emerged a fundamental appreciation of cuisine that gradually became the source of collective pride for the bourgeoisie.

Sensibilité and Accepted Manners of Eating, Dining and Socializing from 1800-1825

Composed of a multitude of texts and representations, the story of French culinary culture requires books, not cooks; it wants readers as well as writers. For these narratives transform the material good into something else. They convert food into cuisine, eating into dining. They transpose the culinary into the symbolic, the intellectual, and the aesthetic-the ingredients required to transform individual encounters into a collective experience.³¹

Central to the creation of the field of gastronomy, or the appreciation and glorification of the art of eating, were the texts written by the three all-stars and founding fathers of the field. Carême's *L'Art de la Cuisine Française*, Brillat-Savarin's *Physiologie du goût*, and Grimod de la Reynière's *Almanach des Gourmands* were influential because they heightened food to a level beyond that of basic subsistence. The manner in which the authors described ingredients, constructed menus and suggested plans for dinner parties all contributed towards the creation of a new form of cuisine. Cooking became more than cooking. For these authors, and eventually their readers, food, cuisine, meals and dining became directly linked with such esoteric social concepts as "gastronomy" and "gourmandism."

All three men were to varying degrees more than culinary writers; they were agents of change in their society. Regardless of the impact they had on the culinary world (which was and remains to this day immense) they also ignited sentiments within the burgeoning bourgeois population that fueled the centralization and concentration of a set of values and characteristics for the group. The influence of their works is a testament to the power of the written word in the construction of a bourgeois identity in early nineteenth-century France. Though we can never know for sure what each man thought, it can be generalized that none of them were writing for the lower tier, property-less peasant class. First, the publications cost money and most of the

³¹ Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, 83.

instructions took into consideration the fact that the reader would have a wait staff, a full kitchen staff and would have the capacity to entertain on a regular basis. Just as there were inherent contradictions in the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen, these texts also had underlying messages of who could be included in the realm of gastronomes and who by default, could not.

Despite the fact that each author at some point in their texts states that “anyone” can be a gourmand, there are certain factors which would prevent the lower classes from becoming true gourmands. Grimod de la Reynière claimed to have written his *Almanach* to educate the general public, but in order to compile the information he organized a highly exclusive club of diners comprised of his close upper class friends who acted as the ultimate authority figures and judges of cuisine. The information laid out in the *Almanach* first had to be tested by this elite group of men. Further, the social gatherings which both Grimod de la Reynière and Brillat-Savarin suggested that the true gourmand throw were exclusive because they were limited to those who could afford to put on such events; they were also open-ended because the authors do not specify that the texts were written as manuals for the bourgeois man.

It is important to remember that these men were writing during a time of social and political transition – a time when they were still heavily influenced by aristocratic notions of good manners and class, and yet also promoted individualism and knowledge that was intrinsic to the emerging bourgeois mentality. But we see a looming presence in all of their texts – the presence of the adopted mannerisms of the aristocracy that still pervaded life in the decades under Napoleonic rule and during the Restoration. Elements such as entertainment and outward appearance were prevalent in the gourmand discourse, but so too was the emerging value placed on knowledge - of ingredients, markets and recipes – and most importantly of good taste.

Burgeoning Dichotomies: Dining in the Public versus Private Spheres

At last the restaurants appeared; an entirely new institution, by no means studied sufficiently, and in which any one who has some money in his pocket can immediately, infallibly, and without any other trouble than that of wishing for it, obtain all the positive pleasures of which the organ of taste is susceptible.³²

– Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût*

Gastronomy, or what Ferguson refers to in her book as the “systematic, socially valorized pursuit of culinary creativity,”³³ originated in the nineteenth century. Gastronomy was an overarching term that was used to describe the acts of eating in both the public and private spheres. The emergence of the restaurant as a neutral space wherein people could gather, share a meal and demonstrate good manners was a notable development by 1825 in France. Restaurant-goers during the Revolution were seen as gluttonous because the space was reserved for the aristocratic elite. But the space took on a totally different meaning shortly thereafter. Rebecca Spang argues that in the early nineteenth century, largely due to food writers like Grimod de la Reynière and Brillat-Savarin, restaurants grew to be less stigmatized and took on a whole different meaning.³⁴ Brillat-Savarin discusses the importance of the restaurant in one of the meditations (or lessons) in his book *Physiologie du goût*. For Brillat-Savarin, the restaurant was still a relatively new and pleasant space wherein people with money could enjoy a fine meal. He stresses, though, the importance of eating in the company of others because the restaurant was as much a social space as it was a place to eat and dine. Eating alone was dangerous because it could lead to egotism.³⁵

³² Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, Frank Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste, Or, Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*, New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926, 255.

³³ Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, 84.

³⁴ Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000, 147-149.

³⁵ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 260.

The earliest restaurants were so named after the simple bouillons which they served – a restorative drink that consisted mainly of the stock from cooking game animals and poultry.³⁶ Initially, these restorative supplements were intended for the ill and weak in order to “restore” their health. These spaces served in sharp contrast to the dining rooms or *salle à mangers* of the Ancien Régime, which were exclusively indicative of the aristocracy. Gradually, as bouillons fell out of style, the restaurant evolved into a space which seated groups of people at their own individual tables. Meals were served at unspecified times, and customers could choose their own options from a menu.³⁷ In this way, the restaurant became a personal space, because it was the place where the bourgeoisie came to taste, critique and judge food; but it also reflected the way that the bourgeoisie socialized as a group.

In his book *All Manners of Food*, Stephen Mennell touches on the origins of the public restaurant in both France and England after the French Revolution. After presenting the idea that coffee houses, cookshops and inns had all been in existence in both countries for decades, even centuries, prior to the Revolution, he asserts that none of these locations had the same social impact as restaurants. “Inns provided meals for the travelers who stayed in them, but one ate what one was given when one was given it.”³⁸ Mennell argues that the restaurant scene developed differently in France than in England, or other European countries in which inns were popular, because of the guild of *traiteurs*. The *traiteurs* were the “caterers” guild set in place by the monarchy; once the monarchy was overthrown and the guild system was abolished in 1789,³⁹

³⁶ Bruno Girveau and Marie-Laure Crosnier Leconte, *À Table au XIXe Siècle : Paris, Musée d'Orsay, 4 décembre 2001 - 3 mars 2002*, Paris : Flammarion, 2001, 172.

³⁷ Rebecca L. Spang, “Restaurants,” Solomon H. Katz and William Woys Weaver, *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, Vol. 3. New York: Scribner, 2003, 181.

³⁸ Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1985, 136.

³⁹ Liana Vardi, “The Abolition of the Guilds during the French Revolution,” *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Autumn, 1998), 708.

there were plenty of *traiteurs* without work but with expertise to contribute to establishments like restaurants. One train of thought is that restaurants took shape because there was a surplus in skilled workers and eventually a demand was created for places for them to work.

Gradually, the restaurant took on a new dimension as the meeting places became socially, economically and politically viable entities for French society. “As we know it today, the restaurant represents the translation of an eighteenth-century cult of sensibility into a nineteenth-century sense of taste: the mutation of one era’s social value into another’s cultural flourish.”⁴⁰ The boom of the restaurant after the Revolution marked a new stage for cookery, and as Mennell argues: “there was now an alternative route to the top of the culinary profession; rather than ingratiating themselves with one of a small number of rich employers, ambitious cooks could proudly compete with each other for the custom of a much larger body of diners-out.”⁴¹ In other words, restaurants became important spaces for chefs to explore their own individual styles and to display their unique senses of taste. “The transformation undergone by the cookery profession [in the early nineteenth century] was parallel to the more familiar changes in the social roles of writers, musicians and artists during much the same period.”⁴² The relationship between chefs and their customers grew much more intimate in the restaurant setting. At the same time, as Mennell points out, there was an increased level of capitalist competition amongst chefs as they realized dreams of opening their own restaurants.

Though restaurants were still only accessible to a small fraction of society by 1825 due to cost, Spang argues that French citizens still imagined the restaurant as a social institution and

⁴⁰ Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, 3.

⁴¹ Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 142.

⁴² Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 142.

place of luxury.⁴³ She attributes the restaurant's rise in popularity in part to the fact that playwrights and authors of the era began writing about the restaurant. These writers brought the idea of the restaurant into the imagination of the reader in much the same way that Grimod de la Reynière et al. brought the idea of gourmandism to the intellectually curious bourgeois man. The notion of the restaurant gradually became elevated to a space beyond that of a public dining room; it became a social mecca – a place to see and be seen and to eat exquisite food. Further, the restaurant scene became synonymous with Paris and attracted visitors from across Europe. The restaurant was more than a place to eat; it was a spectacle, and more importantly an accessible one in which those with the means to do so could partake.

Carême, Brillat-Savarin and Grimod de la Reynière were then pivotal in both the recreation of a new type of cuisine that was reflected in both the public and private spheres. They all rejected the notion of gluttony and made a strong effort to refute any associations with the word by redefining what is meant to be a “gourmand.” The restaurant became a space for these “gourmands” to display their appreciation for cooking and to critique the food of modern cuisine. A “gourmand” in the early nineteenth century was a food critic but also a well-educated, polite host with a good sensibilité. These authors were simultaneously giving their bourgeois readership tips on how to better prepare food and host private parties, and also how to embody good manners in which to display publically at restaurants and cafés.

⁴³ Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, 177.

The definition of the term “bourgeois” is so elusive and multidimensional when referring to the year 1800 that it is difficult to know whether or not Carême, Grimod de la Reynière and Brillat-Savarin were writing for a distinctive group of people who thought of themselves as “bourgeois.” There was a clear and marked shift leading up to and following the Revolution in which the bourgeois citizen emerged victorious in a society which had for so long been dominated by despotic rule. The “middle man” as it were, gradually began to develop a common identity despite the political instability of the French government.

One possible way that a bourgeois identity was formed, or at least reinforced, was through text. It is possible that bourgeois men and women became inherently “united” through purchasing such texts as Grimod de la Reynière’s *Almanach des gourmands*. Spang notes that “the first volume of the *Almanach* sold at least twelve thousand copies...their [the contributors] chatty collages nonetheless read as inside scoops and gossipy tabloids.”⁴⁴ The witty style of the newsletters made them immediately approachable to the reader and the authors’ didactic style it could be argued, made the reader feel as though he or she was harnessing new knowledge. Similarly, Brillat-Savarin’s playful lexicon and the simultaneous seriousness with which he wrote could have been the reason why his text appealed to the bourgeois intellectual of the early nineteenth century. And finally, Carême’s exhaustive compendium could have contributed towards the construction of a modern cuisine that helped to define a national French identity because his cooking techniques, recipes and reconstruction of the typical meal were revolutionary for the time period. The keys to determining whether or not these three men contributed towards the creation of modern cuisine, defining bourgeois identity or building a

⁴⁴ Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, 171.

modern national French identity lie in the intricacies of their respective texts and the audience for whom they wrote.

Part II: The Development of Modern Cuisine and the Main Actors

Grimod de la Reynière: *Mainnerisms of the Table*

Background and Banquets

Alexandre Balthazar Laurent Grimod de la Reynière, nephew of Louis XVI's minister Malesherbes, was born on November 20, 1758 to an aristocratic mother and a wealthy tax-collector father.⁴⁵ He was raised in an expansive upper class home on the luxurious boulevard Champs-Élysées in Paris, wherein he was exposed to lavish meals throughout his upbringing as his parents were fond of entertaining.⁴⁶ His parents were said to have had one of the best tables in Paris, hosting multiple-course dinner parties for aristocratic friends and acquaintances on a regular basis.⁴⁷ Though his parents were well-known for entertaining others, Grimod was rarely given a chance to partake, not due to his young age, but most probably because he had a striking physical disability of which his parents were ashamed. In an ironic twist of fate, Grimod de la Reynière was born with deformed hands and wore artificial prostheses. It has been said that his parents, when explaining their son's misfortune, told others that he had been mauled by a pig – which was not only entirely fictitious, but also led Grimod to harbor resentment. Despite his atrophied hands, he managed to make a career out of writing reviews for the theater and later

⁴⁵ Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, 88. Grimod de la Reynière's father Laurent de la Reynière was a *fermier générale*: an upper class tax-collector for the farming system, a profession which was generally hated by the public.

⁴⁶ Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 267.

⁴⁷ CooksInfo.com: The Encyclopedia for Cooks, "Grimod de la Reynière," <http://www.cooksinfo.com/edible.nsf/pages/grimodelareyniere>, 2011.

publishing numerous gastronomic journals.⁴⁸ Thanks to those journals, he became one of the most influential food writers of the nineteenth century.

Though raised in a traditional aristocratic home, Grimod was anything but tame and proper. He was well-known for his eccentricity and his gaudy and outlandish dinner parties. The most famous of these parties was held at his parents' home (which his father had constructed in 1775 between the Avenue Gabriel and Rue Boissy d'Anglas) in 1783. This extravagant feast was limited to an exclusive guest list: seventeen guests were invited to partake and an additional three hundred were invited "to be spectators."⁴⁹ Held on the first of February in 1783, guards standing at the door asked each guest upon their arrival: "Are you for Monsieur de la Reynière, the People's Bloodsucker [referring to Grimod's tax-collector father], or for his son, Defender of Widows and Orphans?"⁵⁰ Having not even set foot inside the door, the guests were sure to have been taken aback by this question. The young host was outwardly decrying the work of his father and publicly disrespecting him by use of the word "bloodsucker". But the festivities of the night only continued to break with social norms (for an upper-class dinner at the time).

The food was presented on trolleys in a buffet-style because the host was uncomfortable with valets or waiters. Though little is known of what was actually consumed at the party, of two things, most historians are sure – pork and oil were two featured ingredients throughout the course of the meal. As part of his satirical intentions, Grimod used the dishes that featured said ingredients to make a mockery of his parents in one way or another. The use of the pork could have represented the resentment he felt for his parents' fictitious story of his hand being mauled by a pig. The oil used in numerous dishes apparently mocked the excessive amounts of oil his

⁴⁸ Menu Fretin, "Grimod de La Reynière et son Groupe," <http://www.menufretin.fr/-Grimod-de-la-Reyniere-et-son-.html>, 2011.

⁴⁹ Nichola Fletcher, *Charlemagne's Tablecloth: a Piquant History of Feasting*, New York: St. Martin's, 2005, 85-86.

⁵⁰ Fletcher, *Charlemagne's Tablecloth*, 85-86.

father used on his food.⁵¹ Though to the modern-day onlooker, the host's actions may seem immature, it is important to remember the context in which these banquets occurred. This lavish party was the first of its kind. Grimod became the ultimate host in that he made sure his guests experienced a unique and unforgettable evening. Even when his guests were strained and perhaps uneasy, say for example when he demanded they stay until dawn to gather in the study for digestifs (after-dinner drinks) and an electrical show performed by a scientist. The spectacles he created became his trademark. True, it may have been excessive to lock his guests inside the party and not allow them to leave until seven the next morning. But in the end, this party and the many more that were to follow represented quite literally a show, in which the ultimate host created a lively and entertaining atmosphere. "Grimod's delight in staging dining scenes that were theatrically absurd and macabre, a sort of *cuisine noire* (black-comedy cuisine), is peculiarly modern."⁵² Not only did he overemphasize certain ingredients like pork and olive oil to make a mockery of his parents, but on a broader scale, he used these grand spectacles as a way to mock the traditions of the aristocracy. Spang suggests that the presence of the three hundred odd spectators at the feast could have been a jab at traditional monarchical ceremonies like the meals shared by Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI in the Tuileries.⁵³

By admitting observers to his supper, Grimod (the 'defender' of the people) mocked court spectacle, audaciously intimating that any Parisian meal could just as easily merit an audience's observation and a host's theatrical treatment. The audience members at Grimod's supper, and the published attention the meal received, implied that everybody had the right to eat in *grand couvert*, that anybody's dinner was worth observing, that all could be king.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Fletcher, *Charlemagne's Tablecloth*, 86.

⁵² Betty Fussell, "Grimod de la Reynière," *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, Vol. 2, 165.

⁵³ Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, 89.

⁵⁴ Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, 89.

But, she adds, the audience did not play a passive role – they played an active role as observer. Spang argues that Grimod de la Reynière’s inclusion of a crowd of three hundred spectators was twofold. He was poking fun at the absurdity of aristocratic exclusivity and mocking traditional court spectacle. Similarly, he intended to draw attention to the fact that his feast was a new type of spectacle for the public to witness but one which they could not necessarily understand. The meaning behind his antics was never revealed to his diners or spectators, reinforcing the distance between himself as authoritative gourmand and the audience as his pupils. Through this dinner party, he “commented simultaneously on the ceremonies of the absolutist court and on the new institutions that claimed to abolish ceremony and establish brotherhood.”⁵⁵ Grimod de la Reynière was redefining what it meant to be a host. Perhaps it would be expected for a rebel child such as Grimod to be satirizing the opulent lifestyle of his parents and their antiquated aristocratic social norms. But it is even more striking that he also meant to criticize the newer political system for its false inclusivity.

Upon hearing of this debauchorous event, Grimod’s parents were appalled. They decided to send him away to an abbey in Nancy, France (about an hour and a half east of Paris) as a punishment for his reckless behavior. Not only was he challenging the standards of proper society, but Grimod had humiliated them and tainted their name and reputation. Now, his punishment was ever so slightly more than a mere slap across the wrist. Grimod’s parents obtained a “letter de cachet” or order from the King to ensure he be sent to the monastery, making his time there more of a mandated exile. While in the confines of seclusion, Grimod learned a great deal about the manners of the table from the father abbot. He convinced his parents to help fund a new endeavor after a few years in the monastery: he had decided to open a shop in Lyon. Grimod’s parents supported this business venture for obvious reasons – he was

⁵⁵ Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, 90.

making use of an interest in a very practical and socially acceptable way. His store served as a general store of sorts, with products like spices and perfumes. Despite the success of the store, Grimod longed to be in Paris. With his familial relationships intact, Grimod returned to the city in the midst of the Revolution and immediately threw himself into discovering, eating and writing about all things gastronomic in Paris.⁵⁶

The Judge in all his glory: The evolution of a food writer

“The principal merit of Grimod de la Reynière...is that of having been the historian of cookery.”⁵⁷ Grimod de la Reynière is considered to be one of the most notable pioneers of the creation of the genre of gastronomy. Before his newsletters were published, the pleasures of the table, appreciation for cuisine and fine dining was considered gluttonous behavior. The term “gastronome” was associated with words such as “epicure” and “gourmand” – pejorative terms used to describe people who ate greedily or to excess. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, this stigma was slowly beginning to deteriorate as the “gastronome” emerged: a man who not only appreciated high quality food, but wrote about it with skill and precision:

A gastronome is generally understood to be a person who not only cultivates his own ‘refined taste for the pleasures of the table’ but also, by *writing* about it, helps to cultivate other people’s too. The gastronome is more than a gourmet – he is also a theorist and propagandist about culinary taste.⁵⁸

Few, if any, men had written about food or the manners of eating the way that Grimod started to do with his publications of the *Almanach des gourmands*. “The gastronome as a distinct and recognisable figure, and gastronomic writing as a distinct genre, emerged after the

⁵⁶ CooksInfo.com, <http://www.cooksinfo.com/edible.nsf/pages/grimodelareyniere>, 2011.

⁵⁷ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, xix.

⁵⁸ Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 267.

French Revolution.”⁵⁹ Grimod de la Reynière was the key to the creation of this “distinct and recognizable figure.” He not only advocated that French people renounce the exclusivity of elite haute cuisine and fine dining, but he wanted the bourgeois man to become an active participant in the evolution of fine dining. His writing style was unlike that of Carême’s or Brillat-Savarin’s (and his texts were published prior to theirs). He described food in such a way that it was as if he was constructing a narrative. Whereas Carême’s *L’Art de la Cuisine Française* was written as a step-by-step instructor’s manual and is more reminiscent of the modern-day cookbook with recipes and explanations for preparations, Grimod’s yearly *Almanachs* were less structured. They included poems, songs, short stories and reflections on Grimod’s experiences with food and those of his friends who comprised the *Société Epicurienne*. This selective group of Grimod’s friends met regularly to judge and critique some of the newest dishes on the Paris restaurant scene – in essence, they acted as the first food critics. With the help of these men, who became regular contributors to the *Almanach des Gourmands* and later the *Journal des Gourmands et des Belles*, Grimod created a public platform for the display of the evolution of modern cookery.

Grimod and his band of Judges

The anecdotes and exploits of the *Société Epicurienne* are crucial to gaining a better understanding the structure of modern cuisine and the shifting social structure of the early nineteenth century. This small group of twenty four of Grimod’s closest friends started meeting after his first outlandish feast in 1783. They aptly called themselves the “Wednesday diners” as

⁵⁹ Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 266.

they gathered for dinners on that day each week in what Jean-Claude Bonnet called “gastronomic séances in which the only purpose [was] experimentation with taste and gourmand know-how.”⁶⁰ The group functioned on more than just a social and recreational level, Grimod saw the guests as jurors. He renamed the group “le jury dégustateur” (jury of tasters) and presided as the host at the meals wherein the jury blind taste-tested products from local vendors. Grimod describes the process of evaluations in the *l’Almanach*: “He eats, he drinks all that he is given to taste, without knowing the name of the authors; to ensure that it is the merit alone of the products that he decides on; and that he cannot be influenced by the brilliance of an illustrious name, or be turned off by the obscurity of another that is not yet well-known.”⁶¹ Grimod’s system of judgment was remarkably egalitarian and democratic – the sole purpose of the meals was to judge the quality of the food regardless of place from which it came. The yearly publications of the *l’Almanach* consisted of not only different ideas for menus and dishes, but also anecdotes, songs and poems collected from these meetings.

The *Société Epicurienne* evolved out of the jury of tasters as the group started to meet in local cafes to taste local food and beverages at festive “meetings.” The word meeting is used loosely here because the gatherings were more like parties than anything else. Referred to by some scholars as *goguettes* (which translates loosely to a festive or carnivalesque society), Grimod’s *Société* was modeled after *la société du Caveau*, a famous *gouquette* founded in 1729 by Pierre Gallet. These societies were traditionally rooted in song and dance – as the attendants gathered to chant and be merry. Grimod’s interpretation of the *goguettes* was obviously more

⁶⁰ A.B.L. Grimod de la Reynière, Jean-Claude Bonnet introduction, *Écrits Gastronomiques: Almanach des gourmands (première année: 1803) et Manuel des amphitryons (1808)*, Paris: Union Générale d’Éditions, 1978, “...des séances gastronomiques dont la seule finalité est l’expérimentation gustative et le savoir gourmand,” 23. Translations in this thesis are my own unless otherwise noted.

⁶¹ Grimod de la Reynière, *Écrits Gastronomiques*, 24.

centered on food and drink *dégustations* (tastings) but there was still a fair amount of chanting, toasting and ritual singing throughout their meetings.

In their lengthy (sometimes five hour-long) tastings, discussions and musings Grimod gathered the information for his gastronomic reviews. “He originated the double genre of food critic and restaurant guide, providing practical information as well as critical standards.”⁶² The group considered themselves to be experts – at least in the art of appreciating high quality food and providing a fun and lively atmospheres in which to do it. As is described in the January edition of the *Journal des gourmands* (1807) they met at *Au Rocher de Cancale* (a café located in the 2e arrondissement of Paris which still exists today).⁶³ This society met on the twentieth of every month to have tastings as well as “toasts, libations and songs.”⁶⁴ According to some scholars, the fact that the group convened on the twentieth of every month was no accident – it was a play on words as the French pronunciation of the word twenty “vingt” is the same as the French word for wine, “vin.” On the occasion of December 20th, 1806 they enjoyed oysters, what they thought to be a manioc soup but was really tapioca (“named *tapioca* by its inventor”) and for finished with a nice “roasted coffee.”⁶⁵ The account of the meal reads like minutes in a meeting (which makes sense since the section concludes with the name of the secretary of the group). The purpose of the *Journal des gourmands* is perhaps less instructive and more a tangible way for people outside the social tier of Grimod and his compatriots to learn or become privy to the way he enjoys food and pays respect to it.

⁶² Fussell, *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, Vol. 2, 164.

⁶³ A.B.L. Grimod de la Reynière, *Journal des Gourmands et des Belles, ou L'Épicurien Français (Rédigé par quelques Littérateurs Gourmands, plusieurs Convives des Dîners du Vaudeville, un Docteur en Médecine, etc., etc., etc.) Volume Five, (Year Two): First Trimester, January*, Paris: Capelle et Renaud, 1807, 46.

⁶⁴ Grimod de la Reynière, *Journal des Gourmands*, January, 1807, « toasts, des libations et des chants, » 47.

⁶⁵ Grimod de la Reynière, *Journal des Gourmands*, January, 1807, « (“nommé *tapioca* par son inventeur”)... “du café torréfié.” 47.

Grimod de la Reynière's *Société Epicurienne* was created as an imitation or revival of the infamous *Dîners du Vaudeville*. This society was active between 1796 and 1801 and served as a way for upper class gourmands to gather, feast, drink and socialize. In true Grimod fashion, the purpose of his society was to simultaneously make of mockery of the exclusive nature of the *Dîners* and allow his friends to have their own exclusive group of gourmands. The purpose of the *Journal des Gourmands* was to recap the goings-on at these exclusive meetings held at local cafes. Just as Grimod had spectators at his dinners, this publication served as a way to reinforce social order. Grimod considered elite institutions to be unnecessarily exclusive and yet he himself was contradictory – he had an exclusive group of diners who partook in the tastings and then the general public had to wait to hear about the meetings a month later in the journals. It is fair to say that Grimod still believed that a certain amount of social order was necessary in order for society to function best. Despite the anti-nobility notions displayed at his mocking feasts, he still believed in the exclusivity of bourgeois society. The meetings of the *Société Epicurienne* were highly exclusive and he maintained complete control over the reports from the meetings that ended up in his publications.

Almanach des Gourmands

Grimod's writing emphasizes the need for a discriminatory palate, and constantly defends the idea of a gourmand as critic rather than glutton. He is considered to be one of the first men, or people for that matter, to have developed analytical French gastronomic literature – a genre which is markedly different from other food-related publications prior to 1806 which focused purely on menus or recipes. "Gastronomy – the socially prized pursuit of culinary excellence –

constructed its modernity through an expansive culinary discourse and, more specifically, through texts.”⁶⁶ One of these texts that helped to construct the very definition of gastronomy was his *Almanach des Gourmands*.

Published annually between the years 1803 and 1812 (with the exception of two years), Grimod de la Reynière’s *Almanach des Gourmands* served as a comprehensive review of merchants and vendors in Paris at the time, various products listed seasonally, and eventually more pieces on social commentary and restaurant reviews.⁶⁷ He begins with his declaration of what he considers to be the appropriate description of a gourmand:

A Gourmand is not only one who eats with depth, choice, reflection and sensuality, one who leaves nothing on his plate nor in his glass...he must attach himself to a more strident appetite, without this jovial humor the best parties are nothing but sad bloodbaths...he must...continually use all the senses with which nature endowed him; finally his memoirs must be embellished with a mass of anecdotes, stories and amusing tales, with which he fills the space of services and the gaps between courses.⁶⁸

For Grimod, a gourmand had to be highly attuned to his senses, he had to eat with depth and sensuality (and he had to eat everything). He must be witty and intellectual and most of all, he must be a warm and inviting host. This aspect was important to Brillat-Savarin and Carême as well. A good gourmand, then I would extrapolate, was a multi-talented and gracious host whose temperament was calm, jovial and erudite, and whose dinner parties created the platform for social change. He defined a good maître d’hôtel in his *l’Almanach* as someone who: “is at the same time an excellent cook, fine taster, enlightened purveyor, skillful servant, an exact

⁶⁶ Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, 84.

⁶⁷ The journal was not published in the years 1809 and 1811.

⁶⁸ A.B.L. Grimod de la Reynière, *Almanach des Gourmands*, Paris: Pierre Waleffe, 1968, « Le Gourmand n’est pas seulement celui qui mange avec profondeur, choix, réflexion et sensualité, celui qui ne laisse rien sur son assiette ni dans son verre...il doit joindre au plus strident appétit, cette humeur jovial sans laquelle le meilleur des festins n’est qu’une triste hécatombe...il doit...avoir dans une continuelle activité tous les sens dont l’a doué la nature; enfin sa mémoire doit être ornée d’une foule d’anecdotes, d’histoires et de contes amusants, dont il remplit les vides des services et les interstices des mets, » 5.

calculator, agreeable speaker, official agent and polite.”⁶⁹ Grimod insisted that a good host was more than just someone who was knowledgeable about food – he was courteous, well-informed, a good entertainer.

In a section of the *Almanach* entitled “Du Voisinage a Table” (Neighbors at the Dinner table), Grimod recounts an interesting tale of the importance of place settings. He describes a recent dinner party which he attended wherein the dinner guests were uneasy and in fact peeved because their personalities did not mesh well with those of the people seated next to them. Grimod (ever the problem solver) then goes on to say that it was the fault of the host for not having more forethought and consideration for his guests. He suggests seating the poet with the comedian, the priest with the magistrate and the banker, the shopkeeper and the merchant together because they “speak a similar language.”⁷⁰ This passage is interesting because not only do we see the forceful way that Grimod asserts his opinions. But we also get a glimpse at the changing interactions between people of various social strata all attending the same dinner party. Instead of focusing on the silverware or the décor, Grimod focuses on the interpersonal aspect as the key to a successful dinner party. Simple place cards and forethought by the host could completely change the tone of the evening, making sure that one’s guests are more inclined to return in the future. For Grimod and his jury, it was not only crucial that the food was well-prepared (and they detail numerous ways in which to prepare delicious food), but it was perhaps more important that the public demonstration of the food follow an exact and proper formula. A good host had to be thoughtful and intelligent- mindful of the needs of his guests, respectful of the food, and do everything possible to create an intimate, comfortable and personal setting in which his guests could mingle.

⁶⁹ Grimod de la Reynière, *Almanach des Gourmands*, 1968, « à la fois excellent dégustateur, pourvoyeur éclairé, serviteur adroit, calculateur exact, diseur agréable, agent officieux et poli, » 14.

⁷⁰ Grimod de la Reynière, *Almanach des Gourmands*, 1968, « parlant une langue à peu près commune, » 60.

With the success of his *Almanach*, Grimod and his fellow gourmands decided to start publishing a new body of work – a monthly food journal that would focus less on restaurant reviews and more on analyses of ingredients, seasonal preparations and anecdotes enjoyed by the *Société Epicurienne* at their monthly meetings. Grimod believed that the public demanded an authoritative figure on the subject of gastronomy, and with his expertise in dining out (meeting with his jury at the restaurant *Au Rocher du Cancale* to test local fare on a regular basis), he self-designated himself as the perfect candidate.

Journal des Gourmands et des Belles

It is then with a new dose of zeal, of courage, and of appetite that we enter into this difficult career, and that we devote without reserve our digestive abilities. We hope at least that our readers will be grateful to us for boldly chasing after the career of indigestions for them, and for constantly putting ourselves at risk to brave all the dangers of the job of the taster, for showing them the pleasures without fear, and joys without alarm.⁷¹

It is in these first few words of the first ever edition of the monthly newsletter, *Journal des Gourmands et des Belles* that Grimod de la Reynière lays out the intentions of the series. In this passage, as in many other places throughout the newsletter, Grimod describes the seriousness with which he and his trusty *Société Epicurienne* take the process of tasting and critiquing food. As he introduces the series, it is clear how seriously Grimod takes the position of “dégustateur” or taster. For him, the career is more than a responsibility – it is borderline dangerous. As Grimod explains, the tasters are risking indigestion for the sake of educating the

⁷¹Grimod de la Reynière, *Journal des Gourmands*, January, 1806, « C’est donc avec une nouvelle dose de zèle, de courage, et de l’appétit que nous entrons dans cette carrière difficile, et que nous y consacrons sans réserve nos facultés digestives. Nous espérons au moins que nos Lecteurs nous sauront gré de courir pour eux avec intrépidité la carrière des indigestions, et de nous exposer sans cesse à braver tous les dangers du métier du dégustateur, pour leur préparer des plaisirs sans craintes, et des jouissances sans alarmes, » 22.

public on the valor (or lack thereof) of certain local products. I would propose that perhaps Grimod was inadvertently admitting that his ideas are dangerous and that by writing the book he is putting something at risk (be it his stomach or his reputation). But what could be at risk for the self-proclaimed gourmand? Maybe the greatest risk Grimod faced was being labeled a glutton – a sinful quality for the time. We know that he was certainly not the bashful type and cared little about social stigma; but, if his morals were attacked, then his credibility would have been belittled. So he had to defend his actions as “anti-gluttonous” (just as Brillat-Savarin did) throughout his publications. In true Grimod style, he mocks this idea of sinful gluttony at one point in the *Journal* by referencing the Pagan god Comus when he asks for protection from indigestion.

“Powerful god Comus, dear⁷² divinity of Gourmands, born protector of all appetites, deign to support ours, maintain it [our appetite] in all your splendor and give it new strength each day.”⁷³ In keeping with Grimod’s sarcastic and playful demeanor, the gourmand prays to the mythical Greek god Comus. Comus, otherwise known as Komos, was the god of revelry, merrymaking and festivity.⁷⁴ As the son and cup-bearer of the god Dionysus and daughter of Circe, Comus was known to be a practical joker. Said to have invented a potion that turned the head of anyone who drank it into a beast, the modern-day reader might know him as he is represented as Puck in Shakespeare’s play *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.⁷⁵ The irony of the passage lies in the fact that Grimod addresses a Pagan god when asking for guidance and

⁷² Grimod uses the word *chère* in the original text – a word that I have translated to mean *dear* in this context. Interestingly, though, *chère* in French is another word for good food – a clear play on words by Grimod.

⁷³ Grimod de la Reynière, *Journal des Gourmands*, January, 1806, « Puissant dieu Comus, divinité chère aux Gourmands, protecteur né de tous les appétits, daigne soutenir le nôtre, le maintenir dans toute sa splendeur et lui donner chaque jour des forces nouvelles, 22-23.

⁷⁴ Aaron J. Atsma, Theoi Project, <http://www.theoi.com/Georgikos/SatyrosKomos.html>, 2011.

⁷⁵ GodChecker.com, Greek Mythology: the Classical Gods of ancient Greece, “Comus,” <http://www.godchecker.com/pantheon/greek-mythology.php?deity=COMUS>, 2011.

strength. If it is to be accepted that the greatest risk Grimod faced at the time was being labeled a glutton, it is clear that he shows little fear towards God and being associated with Christian ideas of sinful behavior. Instead, he prays to the Pagan god of festivities to allow him to maintain his appetite. Though high society at the time might expect Grimod to address God in hopes of defending his behavior and asking for protection from being labeled a sinful glutton, he is rebelling by asking Comus to grant him a healthy appetite.

In its second year of publication, the *Journal des Gourmands* gained momentum and contained more contributions from a variety of Grimod's jurors. The January 1807 issue opens with a powerful, demanding and downright confident statement from a man by the name of Gastermann:

One year has passed since an idea so liberal and enriched gave birth to the *Journal des Gourmands*. Our appetites, aroused by an exercise of twelve months, have acquired a doubled energy...we hope that before the end of the year all those in France and Europe who consider themselves Gourmands will be interested in our success, and that our cult will propagate universally.⁷⁶

The gourmand's word choice is a mélange of eroticism and civil propaganda. He describes the idea for the journal as both liberal and "féconde" – the latter being a word which implies impregnation and enrichment. The double meaning implies more than the fact that the text is as rich in content. Gastermann's statement that follows – that the appetites of the gourmands were

⁷⁶ Grimod de la Reynière, *Journal des Gourmands*, January, 1807, « Une année s'est écoulée depuis qu'une idée libérale et féconde a donné naissance au *Journal des Gourmands*. Nos appétits, aiguisés par un exercice de douze mois, ont acquis une double énergie...nous espérons qu'avant la fin de l'année tout ce que la France et l'Europe renferment de Gourmands s'intéressera à nos succès, et que notre culte se propagera universellement, » 5.

“aiguisé” or “aroused” by the journals – brings an underlying sexual tone to the text. The interplay of food and sexuality is a theme that is repeated by both Carême and Brillat-Savarin. Brillat-Savarin in particular, took it one step further and created a new sense which is at the base of the way humans interact with the world around them (sight, sound, taste, smell, touch...and according to Brillat-Savarin, pleasure or physical love). The interplay of sexuality and gourmandism is repeated at times throughout Grimod’s and Brillat-Savarin’s works most likely due to the fact that the two processes comprise two of the most primal human desires. The language of enticement and sensuality draws the reader in with intrigue. Grimod de la Reynière is also empowering the reader to be proud of his indulgence in and appreciation of such pleasurable things. Similarly, he lays out the appropriate manners of behaving for the gourmand and “host” in his *Manuel des amphitryons* that highlights more external composure and proper mannerisms which eventually (as the bourgeoisie emerged as a social class towards the middle of the nineteenth century) came to be definitive of the bourgeoisie.

Politesse Gourmande

Originally published in 1808, *Manuel des amphitryons* (Manual for Hosts) outlines in detail the proper comportment and manner in which “hosts” should organize dinner parties. Covering everything from invitations to table service, Grimod de la Reynière exhibits a refined tone, a distant departure from his erratic and gaudy style when he hosted his own parties. Just as Carême’s *L’Art de la Cuisine Française au XIXème siècle* was intended to be a guide for the modern home cook and Brillat-Savarin’s *Physiologie du goût* was a manual for the early

nineteenth century gourmand, this work by Grimod de la Reynière was written as a step-by-step guide for the “host.” All three men covered different realms and contributed differently to the development of the early nineteenth century “gastronomic culture,” but Grimod de la Reynière was the first of the three to delve into the gourmand who entertained at home and who dined out in public. His *Almanach* which highlighted popular Parisian vendors encouraged the bourgeois gastronome to venture into the streets and celebrate cuisine publicly. His publication *Manuel des amphitryons* on the other hand was a guide for the gourmand who dined at home. In either case, he encouraged an attitude of intense criticism and hoped to inspire the reader to be a juror and taster who had impeccable knowledge but also an insatiable curiosity to learn more about the pleasures of the table.

The level of detail in the *Manuel* is pretty astonishing. Grimod de la Reynière dictates where the amphitryon should place his napkin, what types of wines he should serve and the precision required at the changing of courses. He even states that the host “must always hold his hands on the table and in evidence; but it is of the utmost rudeness to keep one’s elbows on the table.”⁷⁷ The author demands the same specificity with the remaining requirements for the perfect host. He adds that, “there are eight qualities that are indispensable to forming a good Host: fortune, taste, the innate sentiment of eating well, an inclination to munificence, love of order, grace in manners, amenities in the heart and pleasure in the spirit.”⁷⁸ Here Grimod de la Reynière explicitly lays out the mentality necessary for a good host or gourmand to embody. First and foremost, even before good taste, a good host must have fortune. But what kind of

⁷⁷ A.B.L. Grimod de la Reynière, *Manuel des amphitryons: contenant un Traité de la dissection des viandes à table, la nomenclature des menus les plus nouveaux pour chaque saison, et des Elémens de Politesse gourmande*, Paris: Editions A.M. Métailié, 1983, (1808), «On doit toujours tenir ses mains sur la table et en évidence ; mais il est de la dernière impolitesse de s’y accouder, » 215.

⁷⁸ Grimod de la Reynière, *Manuel des amphitryons*, « Huit qualités sont indispensables pour former un bon Amphitryon : de la fortune, du goût, le sentiment inné de la bonne chère, du penchant à la munificence, l’amour de l’ordre, de la grâce dans les manières, de l’aménité dans le cœur et de l’agrément dans l’esprit, » 243.

fortune must they obtain? He specifies by saying that it is not necessary for a good host to be rich or to have a skilled cook, he must simply follow the guidelines for proper etiquette and table manners and be able to invoke lively discussion at the dinner table.⁷⁹

Here lies evidence of a theme which will recur in the analysis of both Brillat-Savarin and Carême. Grimod de la Reynière states that one need not be overly rich to be a good host, but he also requires (mere sentences beforehand) that a good host be well- off. This, to me, indicates that he never envisioned anyone outside of the middle classes reading his book or being able to be a true Host. In order to host extravagant dinner parties, the perfect host must have been able to afford the food for the accompanying multitude of courses (not to mention having high-quality ingredients). He must also have the space to entertain, and the proper tableware and serving dishes and staff members to execute the meal. Thus it is fair to say that Grimod de la Reynière's *Manuel des amphitryons* appealed to the well-to-do bourgeois man, but was at the same time exclusionary of any other social class below the middle class.

1803, 1912, 2011

Grimod, the *Société Epicurienne*, and his two publications have had a profound impact on French gastronomy. His monthly journals gave the reader something tangible and profound to read, and feel as though they were judging and tasting alongside Grimod and his compatriots. On one side, it is true that the creation of an exclusive group of jurors only mirrors archaic aristocratic notions that haute cuisine was only meant to be enjoyed by the elite. But, as we

⁷⁹ Grimod de la Reynière, *Manuel des amphitryons*, 244.

know, the bourgeois identity that developed at the beginning of the nineteenth century still reflected some characteristics of the Ancien Régime. Grimod did not discount the need for structure in society, but thought that more people should have access to good food *and* be able to judge it. By creating the *Société Epicurienne*, Grimod was reinforcing the new role of the bourgeoisie – that they, before all other French people, were allowed to have access to fine foods that only the elite had been able to access prior to the Revolution of 1789. In reading these journals, the people (or at least those that could afford the 10 francs per year) gained access to the knowledge of Grimod and his critics. I would argue that through the *Journal*, the *Almanach* and the *Manuel des amphitryons*, Grimod de la Reynière created the foundations for a common set of aesthetics and mannerisms that contributed towards defining a unified bourgeois culture.

In 1912, Antonin Reschal published his own rendition of the *Almanach des Gourmands* based on the ideals of Grimod de la Reynière's publications of the early 1800s. Inspired by Grimod de la Reynière's eccentricity and rejection of aristocratic tendencies, Reschal republished his own version of the *Almanach* which reflected the state of cuisine and dining culture at the turn of the twentieth century. In fact, Grimod de la Reynière's *Almanach* has inspired many chefs, gastronomes and authors to publish their own renditions of his work, which is a testament to his lasting legacy on French gastronomy. Not only did he inspire other Frenchmen to write about cooking, but he inspired them to write about the dynamics and importance of gastronomy and national French cuisine at the time at which they were writing. It was Grimod, however, who was the first to bring about the connection between an approachable cuisine, local vendors at which to buy high-quality products, and how this food could be seen as intrinsically French and therefore something in which French people could take pride.

Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste* and the Science of Gastronomy

Brillat-Savarin: the Secret Gourmand

Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, born in 1755 to a family of lawyers, held numerous occupations before secretly publishing in 1825 (just two months prior to his death in February of 1826) what has become an indelible commentary on early nineteenth century gastronomy. After studying law in Dijon, he was elected to the National Assembly in 1789 and became mayor of his hometown of Belley (near Lyon in southeastern France) in 1793.⁸⁰ Having been raised in a proper home and having had an advanced education, he was the model of a good bourgeois man. After the onset of the Reign of Terror in Paris, he fled to the United States and spent time teaching French and music lessons. Upon his return to France three years later in 1796, he was appointed judge to the Supreme Court of Appeals in Paris.⁸¹ Though he did not make a career of his love of food (as did his counterparts Carême and Grimod de la Reynière), Brillat-Savarin was an avid gourmand. As a well-established bourgeois himself, he had a tempered and refined idea of sensibilité and good taste. He was a skilled writer and enjoyed reading the likes of Voltaire.⁸² In addition to being inspired by the style and thoughts of such intellectuals, he also had a strong love of dining and entertaining. He held many a dinner party for his friends when he lived in Paris, though they were much more reserved and tame in nature compared to the feasts that Grimod de la Reynière was known to have hosted.

⁸⁰ Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, 30.

⁸¹ Fussell, "Brillat-Savarin, Jean Anthelme," *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, Vol. 1, 247.

⁸² Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, viii.

He was a cultured man and a curious learner. Having also had a lifelong fascination with the sciences, Brillat-Savarin decided near the end of his life to publish some of his essays in what he called *Physiologie du goût* (the Physiology of Taste). This series of meditations was an attempt at an outline for what Brillat-Savarin thought to be the foundations for the science of cookery. The meditations were as intrinsic to his proposed “science” as say the scientific method is to the natural sciences. *Physiologie du goût* has become one of the most influential essays on gastronomy. Brillat-Savarin is often credited with first conceiving of the field of gastronomy as a legitimate area of study. His writing style is approachable and far from haughty, which is perhaps one of the reasons why it has maintained relevance in the nearly two hundred years since it was first published.

*“It [Physiology of Taste] includes a series of transcendental and mock-serious meditations upon cooking as an art and on eating as a pleasure and remains to-day the most beguiling of the books dedicated to the passion of eating.”*⁸³

In *Physiologie du goût*, Brillat-Savarin reflects on the art of eating and dining from both a scientific and philosophical perspective. First published in December of 1825, Brillat-Savarin’s book remains a classic nearly two centuries later because of the approachable and descriptive manner in which it is written. As Frank Crowninshield describes in the above citation, Brillat-Savarin’s “mock-serious” prose is undoubtedly one of the underlying forces behind this book’s persistent popularity. The author’s scientific and didactic voice is coupled with more humorous descriptions that are aimed to shed light on the frivolities of the aristocracy. The book begins

⁸³ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, viii.

with twenty short phrases that sum up the author's culinary viewpoint and then the bulk of the text consists of thirty lengthy meditations on various facets of what he establishes as the science of culinary art. The meditations range from the processes of physical consumption and taste, to defining what he considers "gastronomy," to anecdotes about certain ingredients and methods of cooking. He also touches on various regimens for healthy eating and drinking, digestion, and even includes more historical meditations such as the "origin of the pleasures of the table" (Meditation XIV). The following pages will provide a glimpse into some of the books' more notable aphorisms, meditations and explications in an attempt to understand why and for whom Brillat-Savarin wrote this book and why it serves as an important document in the history of early nineteenth-century France.

*"Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are":
An exploration of one of the most over-used cookery quotes of all time*

One of the reasons why *Physiologie du goût* is still relentlessly cited in modern-day cookbooks and gastronomic literature is due in large part to the witty aphorisms which grace the introduction of the book. The most iconic of these is undoubtedly the phrase: "Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai qui tu es (Tell me what you eat, I will tell you who you are)."⁸⁴ This saying has been reformulated, reworded and rephrased into so many variations and across so many mediums that perhaps only the true gourmand knows that it was Brillat-Savarin who was the first

⁸⁴ Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût, ou Méditations de Gastronomie Transcendante; ouvrage théorique, historique et à l'ordre du jour, dédié aux Gastronomes parisiens, par un professeur, membre de plusieurs sociétés littéraires et savantes*, Volume I, Paris: A. Sautet et Cie Librairies, 1826, title page. (Note: Brillat-Savarin uses the word « qui (who) » on the title page but in the aphorisms uses the word « que (what). » I do not find there to be a huge difference between the two words, but for clarification's sake felt it was important to note.)

to pen these words. The phrase was also clearly important to Brillat-Savarin himself, as he prints it directly under the title on the title page of his book. The author refers to this iconic saying and the nineteen others that follow it as the “Aphorisms of the Professor.”⁸⁵ Though not a professor in the literal sense, his use of the word indicates that he is writing the book to teach or instruct the reader on manners of good taste. The nod to academia also connotes a certain amount of credibility, and his self-proclaimed title of “professor” is a way for him to command authority of the text.

Brillat-Savarin prefaces the text by suggesting that in order to learn more about the “functions that have a direct influence on health, happiness and even on business affairs,” he had to act as more than a professor: “it was necessary to be a physician, a chemist, a physiologist and...a classical scholar.”⁸⁶ Above all, however, Brillat-Savarin considered himself to be a curious intellectual – someone who was simply inspired by the need to learn more. “I was urged on by a praiseworthy curiosity; by the fear of lagging behind my century, and by the desire of being able to talk without disadvantage with learned men, in whose company I always had a desire to be.”⁸⁷ The text therefore contains scientific as well as sociological language when describing the manners by which individuals or groups eat. Brillat-Savarin was truly a pioneer in his own right; his style was distinguishable from the erudite Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century like Voltaire and Rousseau. Despite being inspired by such learned intellectuals, he managed to evoke his own mannerisms and playful prose. He labels each of the sections of his book as a “meditation” in part because the book is to him a reflection of his own thoughts and opinions, but it is also a tool used to teach and instruct. He supports this by

⁸⁵ Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût*, 1826, « Aphorismes du Professeur, pour servir de prolégomènes a son ouvrage, et de base éternelle a la science, » v.

⁸⁶ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, xlix.

⁸⁷ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, xlix.

asserting: “when I write ‘I’ or ‘me’ in the singular, I am merely gossiping with the reader, who may examine, discuss, doubt, and even laugh; but when I am equipped with the redoubtable ‘we’ I am a professor, and every one must give in.”⁸⁸ His self-centered demeanor does not go unnoticed; he is authoritative and instructive and is not shy about presenting his text as a gift of knowledge to the reader (knowledge which he alone has acquired and needs to share).

In a literal sense, the aphorisms represent short and meaningful sayings that express a general truth. They are as equally witty and playful as they are crucial to providing the framework for his thoughts in the remainder of the book. The sayings serve as a set of guidelines for the reader and outline the new field of study which Brillat-Savarin called the “science” of gastronomy. The phrases range from being contemplative to more lighthearted and droll; for example: “the destiny of nations depends on the manner in which they nourish themselves,” or more humorously, “a dessert without cheese is like a beautiful woman who is missing an eye.”⁸⁹ His fourth aphorism is the most pivotal in setting the tone for the rest of the book: “Tell me what you eat, and I shall tell you what you are.”⁹⁰ Within this phrase lies the implicit message that it is the food we humans consume that comprises all that we “are.” Food is thus more than mere sustenance that fuels our bodies – it constructs us and defines us on a mental, emotional and social level. We make specific choices about “what” we eat on a regular basis. Most humans (with the means to eat thrice daily) contemplate a variety of issues when choosing the food which they intake. Brillat-Savarin’s assertion that these choices make us “what we are” is profound because of its simplicity; he is one of the first writers to have

⁸⁸ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, liii.

⁸⁹ Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût*, 1826, « La destinée des Nations dépend de la manière dont elles se nourrissent... Un dessert sans fromage, est une belle à qui il manque un œil, » vii-viii, xii.

⁹⁰ Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût*, 1826, « Dis-moi ce que tu manges : je te dirai ce que tu es, » viii.

established in such a straightforward statement that what we eat is at the core of our existence and *purpose* as humans.

Brillat-Savarin intended for his aphorisms (and hence his book) to be consumed – for lack of a better word - by all people. The first aphorism reads as follows: “The Universe is nothing without the things that live in it, and everything that lives, eats.”⁹¹ From this general statement which is not necessarily intellectual or profound, but simply factual, he goes on to write, “Animals feed themselves; men eat, but only wise men know the art of eating.”⁹² Brillat-Savarin expands upon his first assertion that “everything that lives eats,” and distinguishes between three levels of eating. On the most basic level, animals “feed” themselves – they don’t eat. The word in this case connotes a primitive means of consumption – that animals are separate from humans because they only eat for survival. Men, by contrast, eat.⁹³ And further, men who are cultured or “wise” are distinguished because they know the *art* of eating. He goes on to describe this art of eating throughout the book as an act that is an elevated, intellectually driven, and deeply rooted appreciation for fine things. Thus, a driving sentiment throughout the text is the idea that eating is an elevated cultural experience. Another equally important element in the text lies in the author’s analysis of eating as a scientific process.

In addition to saying that the aphorisms act as a preamble to his work, he also mentions that they “serve as a lasting foundation for the science of gastronomy.” Two things are implied by his use of the words “lasting foundation.” First that he is creating or “founding” a new way to analyze food – a genre which defines gastronomy both as a science and an art. It is as if Brillat-

⁹¹ Brillat-Savarin, M.F.K. Fisher translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 3.

⁹² Brillat-Savarin, M.F.K. Fisher translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 3.

⁹³ Naturally, as is reflected in literature of the time period, when Brillat-Savarin and his contemporaries spoke of eating and dining, they rarely mentioned women or included women in their discussion of eating. Brillat-Savarin actually does include a section in his eleventh meditation on the role of women as gourmands – a topic which is discussed later in this chapter.

Savarin is trying to legitimize the field by describing it as a science – he is declaring it an intellectual movement worthy of study. It also shows that Brillat-Savarin envisioned the aphorisms to be permanent, recognizable phrases that would continue to define the genre of gastronomy in the future. Once again, he asserts his self-proclaimed authoritative voice.

Meditations, Legitimization and Accommodations

The technical manner with which Brillat-Savarin approaches the beginning aphorisms is echoed throughout the course of the book. Harold McGee notes:

Brillat-Savarin...used *physiology* literally, to mean a scientific analysis of the workings of living beings...roughly a third of his book is devoted to the chemistry and physiology of food and eating...delightful as the aphorisms and anecdotes are, *The Physiology of Taste* would be a lesser book without its attention to science...like the astringent tannins in a red wine, this element lends the whole a certain solidity and dimension, and has helped it age well.⁹⁴

The third meditation introduces the origins of gastronomy in the context of the origin of science in general. Staying true to his double persona of professor and scientist, Brillat-Savarin essentially offers two definitions of gastronomy – the straight-forward and the esoteric. His vague assertion that “gastronomy is the rational knowledge of all that relates to man as an eater” is accompanied by a detailed outline of all things to which gastronomy relates; it is connected to natural history, physics, chemistry, commerce and political economy.⁹⁵ He also differentiates between gastronomy as a science, and cookery, though he points out that both processes are

⁹⁴ Alan Davidson, and Harold McGee, “Brillat-Savarin,” *The Oxford Companion to Food*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 106.

⁹⁵ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 26.

similar because they pertain to the “art” of making food taste “agreeable.” His differentiation between cooking and gastronomy demonstrates that he considered his book to be elevated to a level of analysis and thinking beyond the mundane task of cooking. By comparison, he also attests that gastronomy “sustains us from the cradle to the grave...[it] enhances the pleasures of love and the intimacy of friendship...[it] disarms hatred, renders business more easy, and offers us, in the short journey of life, the only recreation which, not being followed by fatigue, makes us yet find relief from all others.”⁹⁶ Gastronomy then is both a scientific process and has layered implications in bettering the lives of people beyond mere sustenance. It is a cyclical process: it maintains us physically, provides relief from stressors, and beyond that, it betters our lives by making them more enjoyable.

His book reads at times like a textbook wherein he divulges the technical processes the body endures during the consumption, digestion and excretion of food and drinks. When he discusses the senses for example and the intricate manner in which the sense of smell and taste intertwine, he explains:

For myself, I am not only persuaded that without the participation of smell there is no perfect taste, but I am even tempted to believe that smell and taste only form one sense, of which the mouth is the laboratory and the nose the chimney; or to speak more exactly, that the tongue tastes tactile substances, and the nose gases.⁹⁷

This poetic dialogue is followed by a series of experiments which Brillat-Savarin performed in order to prove his hypothesis. His eloquent and descriptive writing style is paired with a uniquely technical approach. He acts in a sense like the writer of a fiction novel and a physicist (or in this case a physiologist). Brillat-Savarin’s emphasis on science is important because it reflects the rational thought proposed by Enlightenment thinkers in the eighteenth century. Yet,

⁹⁶ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 25.

⁹⁷ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 15.

this obsession with science as a way for him to gain legitimacy is matched with a daring prose that is whimsical and definitely not traditional.

He goes into great scientific detail about various ingredients and processes of eating and dining throughout the series of meditations. The meditations are critical to understanding the ways in which French people approached eating and dining and how they began to enjoy eating in the years following the release of this book (post-1825). His constant references to science gave him legitimacy amongst the readership as science at the beginning of the nineteenth century was seen as rational, forward-thinking and relevant. Brillat-Savarin wanted people to take dining, entertaining and the consumption of food as seriously as if it were a science.

Though scientific in nature, *Physiologie du goût* does not read like a straightforward Chemistry textbook. His style of writing is poetic and eloquent; it is as didactic and instructional as it is vivid and flowery. In many ways, his book is very aesthetically pleasing with its colorful examples and stories, especially his lively historical meditations. Seeing as he was influenced by such writers as Voltaire (whose witty prose is matched by explicit social and political commentary) it makes sense that Brillat-Savarin wrote eloquently but did have an intended lesson to be shared. In fact, in the introduction to *Physiologie du goût*, Brillat-Savarin divulges that his writing style is based on that of some of his favorite authors. “There are still some things to say about my style: *because style defines all of a man*, says Buffon...I should write marvelously, because Voltaire, Jean-Jacques, Fénelon, Buffon, and later, Cochin and d’Aguesseau were my favorite authors; I know them by heart.”⁹⁸ Brillat-Savarin’s commentary on cuisine is pragmatic, and yet also romantic in the way he uses strong feeling to emphasize and

⁹⁸ Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût*, 1826, « Il me reste quelque chose à dire sur mon style : *car le style est tout l’homme*, dit Buffon...Je devrais écrire à merveille, car Voltaire, Jean-Jacques, Fénelon, Buffon, et plus tard, Cochin et d’Aguesseau ont été mes auteurs favoris ; je les sais par cœur... » 39.

enhance the experience of eating. His book, one could say, reflects both the element of intellectual critique characteristic of the Enlightenment thinkers, but it is presented in an eloquent and poetic manner in tune with Romanticism. This multilayered writing style is evidenced in his first aphorism when his rational assertion “everything that lives, eats,” is followed by the more romantic “good living is an act of intelligence, by which we choose things which have an agreeable taste rather than those which do not.”⁹⁹ Not only is Brillat-Savarin saying that it is smarter to choose better tasting food but that it is natural and right for people to eat pleasurable foods. There are a number of cases in his book where the author insinuates (either implicitly or explicitly) that eating satisfies and nourishes the body in a deep and powerful way, much the same way that other physical or sexual experiences satisfy the body.

The Pleasures of the Table

One example of where poetic prose meets practical description is in Brillat-Savarin’s meditation on “The Pleasures of the Table” wherein the author distinguishes between the pleasures of both physically consuming food and dining at the table. He points out that the pleasure one experiences from the physical act of eating is rudimentary; it fulfills a primal need to nourish oneself. The pleasure of the *table* on the other hand, “is a reflex sensation that arises from the various circumstances of facts, places, things, and persons present during the repast.”¹⁰⁰ Dining at the table then is more than an act which satisfies needs, it is an experience wherein

⁹⁹ Brillat-Savarin, M.F.K. Fisher translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 142.

pleasure is felt like an automatic “reflex.” The meal has distinguishable parts; the first course serves to satisfy the diners’ hunger and the following courses serve more social purposes.

At the first course, at the commencement of the meal, every one eats eagerly without speaking, without paying attention to what is said; and whatever the rank may be the guest occupies in society, everything is forgotten, and he becomes merely a workman in the grand manufactory. But when the natural wants are satisfied, reflection arises, conversation begins, another order of things is inaugurated, and he who has hitherto been merely a consumer becomes a more or less agreeable guest, according to the means which the Master of all things has bestowed upon him.¹⁰¹

Here Brillat-Savarin demonstrates the structure of a meal as he envisions the gourmand savoring it. He does not deny that all humans have an innate and primal need to eat in order to survive. At first, each person consumes as if they are “workmen” in a factory. The reference to factory work is a reflection of the bourgeois work mentality. Intrinsic to the bourgeois mentality was the idea that hard work and ownership of property would bring success and social status. The image of men who are gathered around the table working mechanistically in the same process is a direct allusion to the bourgeois workers’ mentality that manpower is the driving force behind capitalism and modernity. The table, however, is a space to satisfy man’s common need to eat to survive and then some. The progression of courses leads to further reflection and conversation; this assertion is a way for Brillat-Savarin to suggest that diners are more than blind tasters – they participate in the common act of eating and they expand their intellect by engaging in reflection at the table.

According to Brillat-Savarin, dining results in an almost unparalleled physical and emotional fulfillment. “Physically, whilst the brain is enlivened, the physiognomy brightens, the colour rises, the eyes sparkle, and a pleasant warmth is diffused in every limb...Morally, the

¹⁰¹ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 142.

intelligence becomes sharpened, the imagination warms, and witticisms arise and circulate.”¹⁰² In order to most benefit from gatherings at the table that could provide such physically and morally beneficial experiences, Brillat-Savarin proposes the ideal settings for dinner parties. Ideally, the feast would not exceed twelve guests, of which the men were to be “witty and not pedantic, and the women amiable without being too coquettish.”¹⁰³ These guests, or, “travellers who journey together towards a common object,” who experienced such a perfect feast could, according to Brillat-Savarin, “boast of having been present at his apotheosis.”¹⁰⁴ The only people who could truly enjoy meals such as this, however, were gourmands – a distinction which the reader could attain if he met a precise set of qualifications.

What is Gourmandism?

The meat of the text lies in Brillat-Savarin’s analysis and exploration of what it meant to be a gourmand in 1825. In Meditation XII “On Gourmandise,” he critiques the common definitions of *gourmandise* and how dictionaries at the time he is writing (in 1825) associate the term with “gluttony” and “voracity.”¹⁰⁵ The author asserts that *gourmandise* embodies the exact opposite of selfish overindulgence. Gluttony is characteristic of the aristocrats of the Ancien Régime. *Gourmandise*, as he is redefining it for the nineteenth-century gourmand, is a new sentiment – it describes an aesthetic in which the gourmand appreciates food for its innate and simple qualities.

¹⁰² Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 142-143.

¹⁰³ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 140.

¹⁰⁴ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 140.

¹⁰⁵ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 109.

The social *gourmandise*, which includes Athenian elegance, Roman luxury, and French refinement; which arranges wisely, orders dishes to be prepared skilfully, appreciates energetically, and judges profoundly. This precious quality might also rank as a virtue, and is very certainly the source of our purest enjoyments.¹⁰⁶

Following this florid description, Brillat-Savarin defines in more straightforward terms what exactly he meant by *gourmandise*. *Gourmandise* is an “impassioned, rational, and habitual preference for all objects which flatter the sense of taste.”¹⁰⁷ He goes on to say that *gourmandise* is opposed to excess and that the very purpose of a *gourmand* is to appreciate the simplicity of food. Using his professorial/scientist persona, he lays out a practical definition and then includes the moral and physical implications of *gourmandise*.

Physically, it [*gourmandise*] is the result and the proof of the wholesome and perfect state of the organs destined to nutrition. Morally, it shows implicit resignation to the commands of the Creator, who, in ordering man to eat that he may live, invites him to do so by appetite, encourages him by flavor, and rewards him by pleasure.¹⁰⁸

He counteracts the idea that *gourmands* are gluttonous by saying that it is a God-given right to eat in order to survive. Appreciation of food is thus not sinful but almost an ordination of God. If God required men to eat in order to survive then by default they have an appetite that needs to be satiated. By asserting that it is morally upstanding to be a *gourmand*, the author denounces any possibility that *gourmandise* could be associated with the grave sin of gluttony. Instead, he argues, it is good for men to have a healthy appetite and appreciate food in order to sustain life.

He then delves into a socio-political commentary on the significance of food and how it relates to the state of society. Brillat-Savarin emphasizes how *gourmandise* is beneficial for the economy – and the *nation*. “Considered from the point of view of political economy, *gourmandise* is the common tie which unites nations by the reciprocal exchange of various

¹⁰⁶ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 109.

¹⁰⁷ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 109.

¹⁰⁸ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 110.

articles which are daily consumed.”¹⁰⁹ Brillat-Savarin justifies gourmandise then by explaining how it benefits society as a whole – it stimulates the economy because it provides jobs for a wide range of people. He justifies the field by saying that the presence of restaurants stimulated the economy in the years following the treaty of 1815.¹¹⁰ Though France owed millions of dollars of debt after the Napoleonic Wars, Brillat-Savarin attests that they were able to pay their debts because of *gourmandise*. “When the Britons, Germans, Teutons, Cimmeranians, and Scythians made their irruption into France, they brought with them a rare voracity and stomachs of no common capacity...those invaders ate in restaurants, eating-houses, inns, taverns, at open-air stalls, and even in the streets.”¹¹¹ Thus the foreigners who travelled to Paris post-1815 in fact stimulated the economy by eating in Parisian restaurants and partaking in Parisian dining culture. Gourmandise, argues Brillat-Savarin, is beneficial to France because it provides the arena in which people can go to restaurants to nourish themselves and further, it provides jobs and encourages people to spend. Brillat-Savarin is incorporating both romantic ideas of enjoying food for the pure purpose of savoring it but also makes pointed scientific and *democratic* points about the capitalistic nature of gourmandism and how it supports the economy.

Gourmandism and Class Distinctions

Some knowledge of gastronomy is necessary to all men, inasmuch as it tends to augment the sum of happiness which is allotted to them. This utility augments in proportion as it

¹⁰⁹ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 110.

¹¹⁰ Here, Brillat-Savarin is referencing Napoleon I’s defeat at Waterloo which brought the First Empire (the Napoleonic Era) to an end; the treaties of 1815 brought peace between France and such countries as Great Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia after which France was responsible for, as Brillat-Savarin himself states in the book, paying “the allies seven hundred and fifty million francs, or about thirty million sterling, in three years,” (Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, 111).

¹¹¹ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 112-113.

is applied to the most comfortable classes of society; finally, it is indispensable to those who, enjoying a large income, receive much company, either because in this respect they think they must keep up an appearance, follow their own fancy, or yield to fashion.¹¹²

Not only does Brillat-Savarin say that it is right to enjoy the pleasures of the table, but that all men have access to enjoying these pleasures. In his seventh aphorism he states, “The pleasure of the table is for men of all ages, of every land, and no matter of what place in history or society; they can be a part of all his other pleasures, and they last the longest, to console him when he has outlived the rest.”¹¹³ This statement is crucial to understanding who Brillat-Savarin intended on reading his book. If, as he says, every man regardless of his place in society has a right to enjoy the pleasures of the table, then Brillat-Savarin’s book is more profound than he lets on because it is saying that appreciation of gastronomy transcends class boundaries. That being said, one statement (which has been translated in this case as “no matter of what place in history or society”) is not sufficient enough evidence to claim that Brillat-Savarin intended for his book to be read by people of any and all social class. Further, another translation of the text by Frank Crowninshield phrases it as such: “the joys of the table belong equally to all ages, conditions, countries and times.”¹¹⁴

It is nearly impossible to defend the proposition that Brillat-Savarin was trying to promote a classless society through cuisine. As evidenced in particular by his meditation on “Gastronomic Tests,” the reader gets a sense of how Brillat-Savarin perceived class, and more importantly how he factored gastronomy and gourmandism into the structure of the class system. These tests, or “dishes of acknowledged flavour, and of an excellence so undoubted that the mere sight of them ought to move, in a well-organised man, every faculty of taste,” Brillat-Savarin

¹¹² Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 28.

¹¹³ Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût*, 1826, « Le Plaisir de la Table est de tous les âges, de toutes les conditions, de tous les pays et de tous les jours ; il peut s’associer à tous les autres plaisirs, et reste le dernier, pour nous consoler de leur perte, » ix.

¹¹⁴ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, xxxiv.

envisioned as decisive factors in separating true gourmands from imposters.¹¹⁵ Those people who tasted these meals and “whose countenance [did] not beam with ecstasy” were dubbed unworthy to be true gourmands. According to Brillat-Savarin, “the criterion of the power of such tests is relative, and ought to be suited to the faculties and the habits of the various classes of society.”¹¹⁶ And so he laid out three tests - the first for a gastronome of an approximate income of 5,000 francs a year (Mediocrity), the second 15,000 francs (Comfort) and the third 30,000 francs (Riches). For the first group he assigns veal, turkey with chestnuts, and sauerkraut with sausage. For the next series, he calls for a fillet of beef, venison, turbot, mutton, and a truffled turkey. Finally for the third series, the menu is much more precise in regards to the origins of ingredients, the preparation of the dishes with varying sauces and the presentation. Some examples include: “a fowl of about seven pounds, stuffed with truffles till it becomes almost round,” a *pâté de foie gras*, “truffled quails with marrow, spread on buttered toast *au basilic*,” asparagus, and for dessert a pyramid of vanilla and rose meringues.¹¹⁷ Not only do the ingredients mentioned become increasingly pricier with each group, but the instructions for sourcing and preparation are also more detailed and lengthy; all this in an effort to evoke in the diner “the fire of desire, an ecstasy of enjoyment, and the repose of perfect bliss.”¹¹⁸

Brillat-Savarin’s “tests” are crucial to understanding his perception of class structure and more importantly who he deemed had access to the world of gourmandism. It seems as though the tests would prove that Brillat-Savarin acknowledged there to be members of the bourgeoisie with varying financial situations – some “Mediocre,” some “Comfortable” and some “Rich.” But he emphasizes that men in all three categories could be gourmands, as long as they all

¹¹⁵ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 134.

¹¹⁶ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 135.

¹¹⁷ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 137-138.

¹¹⁸ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 139.

maintained a critical opinion and had an equivalent and appropriate response to the food they were consuming. Though each group had their own criterion upon which they were judged (mainly based upon which ingredients each group could afford to purchase), Brillat-Savarin maintains that the deciding factor regardless of the group was the level of excitement the person showed in response to the food. “All circumstances being appreciated, they ought to be calculated to excite admiration and surprise; a test is a dynamometer of which the power ought to increase in proportion as we rise higher in the strata of society.”¹¹⁹

These tests are proof of Brillat-Savarin’s definition of a gourmand; he did not envision his book being used by anyone of a lesser class than what he deemed as “Mediocrity” - or a man with a lesser annual income than 5,000 francs. But it could be said that through these tests, Brillat-Savarin was trying to promote a unified set of mannerisms for the gourmand. The fact that there were levels to each test reflects the hierarchical nature of the bourgeoisie for the time period (1825). What makes the tests unique is that Brillat-Savarin created a common denominator: at each level, the gourmand must show equal excitement about the food which he was consuming. These tests are a remarkable example of the way that Brillat-Savarin and his fellow gastronomical writers accounted for the complexities of social classes at the time period in their attempts to create one common identity through gourmandism and the appreciation of the art of cuisine.

¹¹⁹ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 135.

A Brief Commentary on Gender

In keeping with the analysis of Brillat-Savarin's intended definition of a gourmand, one wonders about whether or not he considered the idea that women could be gourmands (and participate in bourgeois culture). He does, in fact, dedicate two whole pages to this question and affirms that women can indeed be gourmandes. Grimod de la Reynière admitted in his *Almanach des Gourmands* that women were not welcome at his exclusive dinners with his *Société Epicurienne*. "Women, who, everywhere else, find themselves displaced in a dinner of Gourmands, where the attention, that does not want to be split, is all entirely for that which garnishes the table, and not for that which surrounds it."¹²⁰ Brillat-Savarin, on the other hand, believed that women could be gourmands: "*Gourmandise* is not unbecoming to women; it agrees with the delicacy of their organisation, and serves them as compensation for some of the pleasures they cannot enjoy, and for some hardships which Nature seems to have condemned them."¹²¹ Considering that most of the publications examined in this paper were written by and for men, Brillat-Savarin's inclusion of women is important, but in no way egalitarian. He claims that women have some "hardships to which Nature condemned them," reflecting the misogynistic nature of the time period; a time when women were viewed as weak, feeble and plagued by ailments. Still – there were two molds into which women were placed during this time period, and even towards the middle of the nineteenth century, that are evidenced by his writing. One was the aforementioned weak damsel in distress. The other is the uncontrollably lustful coquette – women were both critiqued for being the weaker sex and simultaneously seen as dangerous for their insatiable and unruly sexuality.

¹²⁰ Grimod de la Reynière, *Écrits Gastronomiques*, 1978, « Les femmes, qui, partout ailleurs, font le charme de la société, se trouvent déplacées dans un dîner de Gourmands, où l'attention, qui ne veut point être partagée, est tout entier pour ce qui l'entoure, » 47.

¹²¹ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 114.

Nothing is more pleasant to see than a pretty female *gourmand* under arms; her napkin is nicely adjusted; one of her hands rests on the table, the other carries to her mouth little morsels, beautifully carved, or the wing of a partridge that must be picked...she does not lack some spice of the coquetry which accompanies all that women do...with so many advantages she is irresistible.¹²²

The female gourmand as depicted by Brillat-Savarin is both demure and coy. He reasons the fact that it is becoming of women to be gourmandes because they are beautiful and gourmandise itself is essentially the appreciation of beautiful things. The female gourmande's appreciation of food makes her irresistibly sexy. The male gourmand is just as tempted by the woman who eats with delicacy as he is by such exotic ingredients as coffee, chocolate or truffles.

The Sexy Truffle

“Taste...is the property possessed by any given substance which can influence the organ and give birth to sensation...it invites us, by arousing our pleasure, to repair the constant losses which we suffer through our physical existence.”¹²³ From this passage, we can draw many things. Taste is more than a sense according to the author, it is an experience. Taste gives rise to a sensual experience by “arousing our pleasure.” Certainly the sexual overtones of Brillat-Savarin's writing are intentional. In the first chapter, he describes the need for the existence of a sixth sense: physical desire. By this he means that all the senses enable a man to exist and that procreation is an innate and primal characteristic that is not only a vehicle for sensual experiences, but is necessary in order for humans to exist. He argues throughout the book that

¹²² Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 114.

¹²³ Brillat-Savarin, M.F.K. Fisher translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 35.

taste and physical desire could be interchangeable (though they serve different purposes) their meanings are the same: they serve basic human needs.

In his second meditation, Brillat-Savarin goes into detail about the operation of taste and the process by which food is processed in the mouth. It is here that we see the author's scientific prose. He details the steps in which a bite is moistened and churned in the mouth and how the tongue with its "varying numbers of papillae which protrude like tiny buds"¹²⁴ provide for the sensation of taste. He goes on to say that taste gives us joy for many reasons but most notably "...because in eating we experience a certain special and indefinable well-being, which arises from our instinctive realization that by the very act we perform we are repairing our bodily losses and prolonging our lives."¹²⁵ Brillat-Savarin's discussion of taste is rooted in scientific explanations but then he gains an almost anthropological style when he explains *why* sensations of taste are meaningful to people. He says that taste is more than nourishment - it gives us a sense of "well-being," of peacefulness and tranquility, and of overall sense of self. It helps us to realize why we are nourishing ourselves and the greater implications of a good meal on our overall health and length of life. Thus, his romantic prose is used in conjunction with his scientific assertions.

One of the foods that incites this sensation and nourishes the body, mind and spirit is detailed in the sixth meditation *spécialités* (specialty foods): the *truffle*. The illustrious "tuber is not only delicious to the taste, but is believed to rouse certain powers whose tests of strength are accompanied by the deepest pleasure."¹²⁶ The author details their rarity, and writes that at the time the book was published in 1825, the truffle was increasing in popularity as more vendors

¹²⁴ Brillat-Savarin, M.F.K. Fisher translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 35.

¹²⁵ Brillat-Savarin, M.F.K. Fisher translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 42-43.

¹²⁶ Brillat-Savarin, M.F.K. Fisher translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 93.

were ordering the luxury product. Any worthy dinner party at the time period would have included truffles in some way to be deemed enjoyable or pleasurable. In the seven pages that the author dedicates to truffles, he details their origins, historical background and nutritional value. But it is in his vivid imagery that the reader sees this “diamond in the art of cookery” come to life and his playful and raunchy sense of humor shine through.¹²⁷

Brillat-Savarin examines the sensual pleasures and erotic properties of the fungi from first a scientific perspective as he literally treats his investigation as an experiment. He estimates whether or not the truffle is hard to digest. His tone is both methodical and whimsy. “We only have yet to examine if the truffle is indigestible...we can see with certainty that the truffle is a food as healthy as it is tasty, and that, taken with moderation, passes like a letter through the post.»¹²⁸ Convinced that the truffle incites feelings of sexual arousal, he recounts an anecdote about his discovery process wherein a female friend of his is hotly pursued by another male guest after a sumptuous dinner party that featured a truffled fowl. Attributing the emboldened attitude of the male guest to the truffle, Brillat-Savarin justifies the erotic properties of the exotic ingredient. “The truffle is not a positive aphrodisiac; but it can, in certain situations, make women tenderer and men more agreeable.”¹²⁹ Similarly, Grimod de la Reynière mentions the truffle in an issue of his *Journal des gourmands*, saying that it has “mysterious incentives... [it is] a stimulating secret and [has] an amorous aroma.”¹³⁰ The seductive properties of the truffle then were no secret to the early nineteenth-century epicure. Both Grimod de la Reynière and Brillat-Savarin highlighted the powerfully seductive properties of such ingredients as the truffle

¹²⁷ Brillat-Savarin, M.F.K. Fisher translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 95.

¹²⁸ Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût*, 1826, « Il nous reste plus qu’à examiner si la truffe est indigeste...on peut regarder comme certain que la truffe est un aliment aussi sain qu’agréable, et qui, pris avec modération, passe comme une lettre à la poste, » 189-190.

¹²⁹ Brillat-Savarin, M.F.K. Fisher translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 97.

¹³⁰ Grimod de la Reynière, *Journal des Gourmands*, January, 1807, «...elle [la truffe] a des aiguillons mystérieux...ce secret stimulant et ce fumet amoureux [en ont fait le mets favori des Belles], » 25.

perhaps to excite the reader and lure him into the enticing nature of the world of the gourmand. Intrinsic to the fulfillment of the gourmand was his ability to enjoy and receive pleasure from the meals he consumed; by highlighting these attractive qualities, the authors gave the bourgeois gastronome access to and the ability to harness their own pleasure through gourmandism. For Brillat-Savarin, it was essential for the true gourmand to have an appreciation of fine things and especially those things which brought him pleasure. The interplay between sexual and gourmet pleasure is inherent to the construction of gourmandism as a fulfillment of basic, primal desires that are justified because they lead to pleasure and happiness.

A Matter of Taste

Brillat-Savarin meditates at multiple points throughout *Physiologie du goût* the possibilities that gourmandise could be an aesthetic and attitude embodied by members of varying social classes. When outlining the parameters of gourmandise he states:

Gourmandise is one of the principal links of society; it extends gradually that spirit of conviviality which unites every day different classes, welds them into one whole, animates conversation, and softens the angles of conventional inequality.¹³¹

But at the same time that it “links” society, and “softens inequality,” he also meditates on its exclusivity. According to Brillat-Savarin, “everyone who wishes it is not a Gourmand.”¹³² He describes those who have a “sensual predisposition” to gourmandise versus those who do not. “Those persons predisposed to *gourmandise* are generally of middling height. They have a round or broad face, bright eyes, a small forehead, a short nose, thick lips, and a rounded chin.

¹³¹ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 115.

¹³² Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 119.

The women are plump, pretty rather than beautiful, with a slight tendency to corpulence.”¹³³ On the other hand, those who are not prone to gourmandise are lanky and long-faced. Nowhere does he explain the justification for why such characteristics lead to the ability to appreciate food. He does add though that those who may not be physically destined to be gourmands could also become gourmands “by virtue of their calling.”

The moneyed classes are the heroes of *gourmandise*. “Hero” is here the proper name, because some contests have been fought, and the high-born aristocracy would have crushed the moneyed classes beneath their titles and their escutcheons, if these latter had not opposed to them a sumptuous table and their strong boxes.¹³⁴

In addition to the moneyed classes, Brillat-Savarin names doctors, men of letters, pious people, chevaliers and abbés. Nowhere does he specify that men below the middle classes could become gourmands. His seemingly egalitarian aphorism at the beginning of *Physiologie du goût* that the joys of the table belong to men of all countries, ages or conditions, is layered with contradictions. It is clear that Brillat-Savarin envisioned the ideal gourmand to be a bourgeois man who viewed eating and dining as an art form and a science.

¹³³ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 120.

¹³⁴ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 123.

Antonin Carême: “King of Chefs and Chef of Kings”¹³⁵

The Master of Pièces Montées: How Carême Rose from Obscurity to Fame

Of the three men upon which this paper concentrates, Antonin Carême has made the longest lasting impression on French cuisine from a culinary standpoint. Grimod de la Reynière was trained first as a lawyer, eventually gained a reputation for his extravagant and satirical dinner parties, then later became known for his published works on gastronomy. Similarly starting out as a lawyer, Brillat-Savarin was also involved in politics before gaining fame for his epic work *Physiologie du goût*. Carême on the other hand, after being forced out of his home at the young age of eleven, developed his love of cuisine training as a chef in cafés across Paris from 1795 to the turn of the century. Though all three men published culinary treasures in their own right, Carême was the only one of the three who was well-known during his lifetime as an esteemed chef.

Born to a poor family in 1784 as Marie-Antoine, Carême rose to fame and prosperity despite his humble beginnings. Considered one of the founders of *La Grande Cuisine Française*, Carême became most well-known during his time for his elaborate confectionary and pastry creations. After completing numerous apprenticeships at a young age, he became a mainstay first in Talleyrand’s and later M. de Rothschild’s kitchens where he built time-intensive *pièces montées* or large set pieces for elaborate dinner parties.¹³⁶ As someone who diligently studied architectural designs in order to build his masterpieces, some considered him to be more of a

¹³⁵ This title has been repeatedly associated with Carême; it can be found in Darra Goldstein’s article “Russia, Carême, and the Culinary Arts,” *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 73, No. 4 (October, 1995), “king of cooks and the cook of kings,” 691.

¹³⁶ Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 144-145.

sculptor or artist than a chef. Carême relayed his knowledge to the mainstream through several published works which allowed for the general public to access his creative and extensive culinary knowledge. With an array of drawings included in the text, his books allowed the reader to get a glimpse into the lavish displays he presented at dinner parties for Talleyrand and the like. His first work *Le pâtissier royal parisien* was published in 1815, followed by *Le Maître d'hôtel français* in 1822, which was written as a guide to becoming the ultimate host. His final work prior to his death in 1833 (of which at the time he had only completed three of five volumes) was entitled *L'Art de la cuisine française au XIXème siècle*. This iconic set of books acts not only as a cookbook which highlights new techniques and recipes, but on a broader scale it also sheds light on the emergence of a national identity that rejected aristocratic tendencies of frivolity and display of wealth. *L'Art de la cuisine Française* influenced master chefs at the end of the nineteenth century like Escoffier, and has since influenced countless professional chefs and gastronomes alike in France and around the world. In essence, Carême's personal work and public persona can be analyzed as an intricate melding between traditional values and modern aspirations from a culinary standpoint as well as on a grander social scale.

Though accounts of Carême's childhood vary widely, most scholars agree that he was born into a very poor family and was forced to leave his home at the young age of eleven in 1795. Due to the dire financial situation of his family, his parents could no longer support him. Carême was literally thrust to the streets and had to fend for himself. Ever the independent and persistent character, Carême found a job through his own will and assertiveness as a young kitchen hand at a cheap restaurant, *La Fricassée de Lapin*.¹³⁷ As opposed to other chefs at the time who gained access to kitchens via recommendations from noblemen and elites, Carême is

¹³⁷ Antonin Carême, Gilles and Laurence Laurendon introduction, *L'Art de la cuisine française au XIXème siècle : Traité élémentaire et pratique*, Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 1994, 8.

unique in that he fought his way into the kitchen rather than landing there due to fortune and circumstance. In 1798, Carême left *La Fricassée* and became a pastry assistant to Sylvain Bailly, one of the most famous *pâtissier-traiteurs* of his time.¹³⁸ In his memoir, Carême explains how he educated himself despite the fact that he could not yet read or write. “...Despite my patient efforts, it is rather difficult for me to pick up on the texts, but the drawings speak to me.”¹³⁹ Examining pictures and looking at architectural diagrams proved to be more beneficial in his self-teaching process than reading text. After gaining a base of knowledge for the craft both independently and in Bailly’s kitchen, he eventually gained enough recognition to venture out on his own. After meeting the famous chef Boucheseiche (Boucher), Talleyrand’s *officier de bouche* or chef de cuisine, Carême was offered a job in his kitchen – a move that would act as the definitive launch of his career.¹⁴⁰ In Boucher’s kitchen, Carême trained meticulously for twelve long years to perfect his craft. Though he came to be known for his incredible talent in the pastry department, Carême yearned to gain a more general mastery of the culinary arts.

The groundbreaking chef became famous for many things: for his sculptural towers of sugar, and also for his multitude of new cooking techniques. What makes Carême so memorable is the way that he approached cooking. As an employee for Talleyrand, Carême gained an uncanny ability to meet the requests of his boss while at the same time taking creative license and coming up with new ideas. His creativity was almost forced, seeing as Talleyrand insisted that the chef never compose two identical menus in the course of a year.¹⁴¹ His creativity was almost a necessity – he had to push boundaries and learn how to make new successful dishes in

¹³⁸ Carême, Laurendon introduction, *L’Art de la cuisine française*, 8.

¹³⁹ Carême, Laurendon introduction, *L’Art de la cuisine française*, (quotation from *Souvenirs*) « ...Malgré mes patients efforts, je saisissais assez difficilement les textes, mais l’objet des dessins venait à moi d’une manière parlante, » 9.

¹⁴⁰ Carême, Laurendon introduction, *L’Art de la cuisine française*, 9.

¹⁴¹ Carême, Laurendon introduction, *L’Art de la cuisine française*, 11.

order to keep Talleyrand's palate (and those of his guests) entertained. Service was of the utmost importance – hence his elaborate pièces montées and emphasis on table settings. “For Carême, the way food was served was as important as the way it tasted.”¹⁴² In 1823, Carême left Talleyrand when he met one of the most refined aristocrats of his time – James de Rothschild. As chef de cuisine, he transformed the famous banker's salon into one of the most respectable and elegant dining locations in the world. There he was able to develop his craft as a chef and as a host to some of the most distinguished guests in the world. At the same time, his cooking techniques matured with time and his inventive combinations became revolutionary.

Most notably, he veered away from the use of intense spices which traditionally were used to mask true flavors of products. He created, almost singlehandedly, a cuisine that was rooted in simplicity. His basic sauces combined modern techniques and surprisingly simple ingredients and flavors. He found a culinary voice through his sauces and this reversion to simplicity was an implicit rejection of the superfluous and excessive nature of fine dining typical of eighteenth century aristocratic feasts. “In one sense, Carême fights what he calls the culinary *errances* (roving) and fantasies of the *Ancien Régime*, a period for the refinement of which he feels a naive nostalgia but that he finds too *approximative* (rough) and uncertain.”¹⁴³ Carême rode the definitive yet elusive line between maintaining traditional customs of the pre-Revolutionary era and keeping his eye toward the future development of modern cuisine. His techniques and creations were pivotal in a time period marked by such significant transition.

¹⁴² Mary and Philip Hyman, “Carême, Marie-Antoine,” *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, Vol. 1, 320.

¹⁴³ Carême, Lauredon introduction, *L'Art de la cuisine française*, « Dans un premier temps, Carême combat ce qu'il nomme les errances et les fantaisies culinaires de l'Ancien Régime, période pour le raffinement de laquelle il éprouvait une naïve nostalgie mais qu'il trouvait trop approximative et incertaine, » 11.

L'Art de la Cuisine Française

Carême begins his five volume all-encompassing instructor's manual with a few short notes – letters to friends and mentors and then his own introduction. First, he dedicates the “fruit of his labor” to La Baronne de Rothschild, a woman whom the chef honors and respects for her fine and delicate taste. He then introduces the text, his goals for the series and the people whom he anticipates would most benefit from the content. Each volume highlights recipes, means of preparation, tips, and manners of presentation for soups, fish, sauces, garnishes and meats. The chef includes various and sundry letters from other chefs, anecdotes and even a set of his own aphorisms in the second volume which add to the depth and dynamic nature of the series. The next section will highlight what I view to be some of the most pertinent information to the process of understanding the emergence of modern cuisine from the five volumes that are *L'Art de la Cuisine Française au XIXème siècle*.

Carême the Philosopher: Aphorisms, Thoughts and Maxims

In his second volume of *L'Art de la Cuisine Française*, Carême includes a series of thought-provoking aphorisms, not unlike those listed at the beginning of Brillat-Savarin's *Physiologie du goût*. He begins the segment with this introduction: “France is the *mère-patrie* (motherland) *des Amphytrions*; her cuisine and her wines are the triumph of gastronomy. It is the only country in the world where one eats well; foreigners are convinced of these truths.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Antonin Carême, *L'Art de la Cuisine Française au dix-neuvième siècle: Traité Élémentaire et pratique suivi de Dissertations Culinaires et Gastronomiques utiles aux progrès de cet Art*, Paris: Ateliers Corbière et Jugain pour le compte de Pierre de Kerangué et Malo Pollès Libraires-Éditeurs, 1981 (1847), Vol. 2, « La France est la mère-patrie

This statement immediately captivates the audience with its downright nationalist sentiment. Carême separates the world of gastronomy into “us and them”: France and the rest of the world. His reference to France as the *mère-patrie* invokes two things in the reader: the sense that France is both a nurturing mother and that it is the home and shelter for its citizens. More importantly though, his use of the word “mother” and “home” brings the reader back to the kitchen, for the traditional role of the mother at the turn of the nineteenth century was in the kitchen. Carême’s reference to the *mère-patrie* is both endearing because it brings about familial senses of home and comfort and nationalistic with the assertion of France as “homeland.” It could even be argued that this rhetoric in itself teeters on a reflection of traditional sentiments (of France as mother) and revolutionary (referring to France as homeland and country). To say that France is the “triumph of gastronomy” then, is a way for Carême to appeal to French peoples’ pride by making them feel privileged to live in a country of the culinary elite. This passage is also a testament to the pride which Carême had for French cuisine – a value which he was clearly trying to instill in his readers. This nationalistic lexicon is used throughout his text as the chef tries to appeal to people across class divides. In this passage, Carême does not single out a particular class of people who have access to French cuisine; he merely states that France’s cuisine is the triumph of gastronomy.

The chef also takes note of the importance of the past in shaping the current state of French cuisine and where it is headed in the future. “The little suppers of the 18th century delighted the lords and the French poets of that fine culinary era...the dinners of the 19th century *réunissent* (bring together) the diplomat, the parliamentary speaker, the man of letters, the

des Amphitryons ; sa cuisine et ses vins font le triomphe de la gastronomie. C’est le seul pays du monde pour la bonne chère ; les étrangers ont la conviction de ses vérités, » i.

learned and the artist.”¹⁴⁵ The significance of his words lies in the fact that he is marking a transition in culinary history. He is calling for, or rather stating with certainty, the stipulations of dinners in the 19th century. No longer are they to be exclusive, but rather, they are to be inclusive and bring together a host of different types of men, from diplomats to artists. In a similarly egalitarian manner, Carême lays out in the aphorisms the guidelines for the best dinner parties. He explains that in order to be successful, the host of the party must work in conjunction with the chef and wait staff. He argues that after all, the chef and the maître d’hôtel are the ones who are most knowledgeable about *l’art alimentaire* (or the art of cooking). He calls upon rich men (*l’homme riche*), cooks (*le cuisinier*), servants (*le serviteur*) and maîtres-d’hôtels as he attempts to redefine the correct manners and contributions each will have in putting on modern 19th century dinner parties.

“The rich man, in order to be served well, must be generous towards his servants...The rich man who gives the example of good actions is a benefactor of humanity.”¹⁴⁶ Not only was *l’homme riche* expected to be kind to his staff, he was expected to work with them: “The best manner for *l’Amphitryon* who wants to put on a good dinner is to have it served by his cook or his officer.”¹⁴⁷ The modern concept that Carême is insisting upon is a sort of symbiotic relationship; the proprietors of the household, the chef and the servant staff must all learn to rely on one another in a more integrated way than they did previously under traditional aristocratic parties in the 18th century. In the same way that the host must experiment with relying on the expertise of his chef, the chef must seek out an employer who respects him. Carême asserts: “the

¹⁴⁵ Carême, *L’Art de la Cuisine Française*, 1981, Vol. 2, « Les petits soupers du XVIIIe siècle firent délices des seigneurs et des poètes français de cette belle époque culinaire...Les dîners du XIXème siècle réunissent le diplomate, l’orateur parlementaire, l’homme de lettres, le savant et l’artiste, » iii.

¹⁴⁶ Carême, *L’Art de la Cuisine Française*, 1981, Vol. 2, « L’homme riche, pour être bien servi, doit être généreux envers ses serviteurs...L’homme riche qui donne l’exemple des bonnes actions est un bienfaiteur de l’humanité, » xii-xiii.

¹⁴⁷ Carême, *L’Art de la Cuisine Française*, 1981, Vol. 2, « La meilleure manière pour l’Amphitryon qui veut gourmander un bon dîner est de le faire servir par son cuisinier ou son officier, » x.

cook must attach himself to *l'homme opulent* (the affluent man) and gastronome who treats him with benevolence.”¹⁴⁸ The series of aphorisms demonstrate Carême’s overall intentions throughout the series of wanting to transform traditional social structures on both an intimate level (private dinner parties for the wealthy) and a grander level (creating new culinary techniques and developing modern cuisine).

Carême Gets Saucy

“...he entirely revamps the art of cookery itself, arguing, among other things, for a cuisine based on “velvety” sauces, rather than the thin, watery sauces favored in the past and for developing a series of basic preparations (brown and white sauces, court-bouillons, force-meats, etc.) that would become the building blocks of classic French cuisine...”¹⁴⁹

In the third volume of his illustrious *L'Art de la Cuisine Française*, Carême divulges some of his most cherished creations – his sauces. This book was actually the last in the series which was published by the great chef during his lifetime. The final two installments, which were compiled mainly from Carême’s notes, were finished and published by Armand Plumerey in the years following the chef’s death between 1833 and 1847. For years, practically since the beginning of his career, Carême took copious notes because he had always had the intention to publish a book such as this five-volume series. The challenge from Talleyrand to be creative and never repeat a menu throughout the course of a year served as the prime opportunity for Carême to test recipes and perfect his craft. While he experimented, he always took notes on the processes, ingredients and manner in which to best serve the recipes he created. The detail with

¹⁴⁸ Carême, *L'Art de la Cuisine Française*, 1981, Vol. 2, « Le cuisinier doit s’attacher à l’homme qui le traite avec bienveillance, » xxi.

¹⁴⁹ Hyman, *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, Vol. 1, 320.

which he explained his recipes allowed for Plumerey to later compile his material relatively easily and make it cohesive in print. Before finishing his third volume, however, Carême gives a slight introduction into his sauce section:

... [In the large aristocratic houses] every day I varied and worked on my *petites sauces* for a few instants before the time of service...but they are so rare now, that, to remedy the decline in modern cuisine, I want to accelerate our work as much as possible and simplify them in execution; moreover the difference is so little sensible, that they arrive at the same results.¹⁵⁰

Carême conveys numerous fascinating points in this brief paragraph. He maintains that he was able to have creative license when cooking for large dinner parties which allowed him to find new combinations of flavors which worked or failed. This section of the book will “remedy the decline in modern cuisine.” This phrase is significant because it shows the chef acknowledging, perhaps even boasting, that his techniques are revolutionary. He points out that there has been a decline in modern cuisine over the past few years (we are to assume the past twenty or so years since he began taking notes while working at the home of Talleyrand). While at the same time, Carême states that his work will end this period of decline. What he calls for in his chapter on sauces is a “simplified execution” so as not to drown out the flavor of the foods which are being presented.

The quotation above may appear to be broad, but in reality, he has in just a few short lines quite possibly mapped out his plans (or at least hopes) for the future of French modern cuisine. By using the word *décroissement* (decline), Carême makes it clear that the quality or standards of French cuisine have decreased; but it also acts as a powerful transition word. He follows his critique with a suggestion: he wants to quicken and simultaneously simplify the

¹⁵⁰ Carême, *L'Art de la Cuisine Française*, 1981, Vol. 3, «... [Dans les grandes maisons aristocratiques] chaque jour je variaais et travaillais mes petites sauces quelques instants avant le moment du service...mais elles sont si rares maintenant, que, pour remédier à ce décroissement de la cuisine moderne, je veux autant que possible accélérer nos travaux et les simplifiant dans l'exécution; d'ailleurs la différence est si peu sensible, qu'ils arrivent aux mêmes résultats, » 3.

preparation process in order to bring modern cuisine out of its decline. Carême is almost saying to the reader, “wake up, read this and repeat...and you will be able to take the future of modern cuisine into your own hands by following my model.” Carême’s vision of non-fussy and simple sauces that enhanced the natural flavor of foods was not only one of the most pivotal aspects of the emerging modern cuisine in the 1830s but has remained an essential part of French cuisine today in the twenty-first century.

It is also important that immediately following his critique of the state of modern cuisine, Carême follows with his sauce section. Aside from his grand *pièces montées*, the chef is most known to this day for these basic sauces which have become the foundation of twentieth and twenty first century French gastronomy. The *traité* (treatise) is separated into *petites sauces* and *grandes sauces*. They are so named because the *petites sauces* stem from and are variations of the four main *grandes sauces*.¹⁵¹ These main sauces consist of *l’Espagnole* (Brown), *le Velouté* (“Velvety”), *l’Allemande* (German) and *la Béchamel* (basic white sauce). The *grande sauce Espagnole*, having nothing to do with the country, is essentially a brown roux which combines fat and flour to create a thickening agent.¹⁵² Its base usually consists of brown roux, brown stock and tomatoes.¹⁵³ *Le Velouté* is velvety soft and smooth and is usually constructed with white stock and yellow roux.¹⁵⁴ With the addition of cream or milk, *le velouté* sauce is transformed into *la Béchamel* – one of the most iconic French sauces of all time. Used as the basis for a range of sauces (largely cheese sauces) it is used in a number of dishes today including Croque Monsieurs and lasagna. The differentiating factor in these new sauces (from sauces of the eighteenth century) was their common base of a *roux*.

¹⁵¹ Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, 70.

¹⁵² <http://www.foodtimeline.org/foodsauces.html#espagnole>

¹⁵³ Harold McGee, *On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1984, p. 331.

¹⁵⁴ McGee, *On Food and Cooking*, 331.

According to Harold McGee, the *roux* is “the French word for “red” [that] at some point in the 18th century came to mean a flour that had been cooked long enough to change color.”¹⁵⁵ The process of combining butter and flour in the saucepan prior to adding vegetables or other ingredients not only improves the flavor of the sauces, but “the practice of precooking the flour improves the dispersion of both starch and fat in the liquid.”¹⁵⁶ McGee adds “... once the roux has been added to the stock, the mixture is allowed to simmer for quite a while – an hour in the case of béchamel, 2 hours for velouté, and up to 10 in the case of brown sauce.”¹⁵⁷ Building sauces upon “concentrated stocks rather than plain broth, and roux rather than raw flour” resulted in “sauces [that] were now suave, velvety, and succulent where they used to be thin and floury in flavor, coarse and uneven in texture.”¹⁵⁸ His reconfiguration of the process by which sauces were made was thus entirely new. Carême was the first chef to rethink such an integral part of traditional French dishes. Further, he categorized his sauces as *en maigre*, or lean, and *en gras*, fat, to “facilitate producing dinner during Lent and on the fast days decreed by the church.”¹⁵⁹ How he came to create a lean *sauce au beurre* (butter sauce) is beyond me, but I suppose his standards for lean and heavy in early nineteenth-century France were different than ours today. To be perfectly honest, I saw very little different in the “lean” sauces – the recipes still called for cream, flour and butter.

Still, Carême’s clear and succinct instructions for the preparation and uses of these sauces remain to this day one of his most notable contributions to modern gastronomy. Not only was the text understandable for professional cooks and chefs to use as bases for their own creations,

¹⁵⁵ McGee, *On Food and Cooking*, 344.

¹⁵⁶ McGee, *On Food and Cooking*, 344.

¹⁵⁷ McGee, *On Food and Cooking*, 345.

¹⁵⁸ McGee, *On Food and Cooking*, 332.

¹⁵⁹ Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*, 70.

but his descriptions were detailed enough so that the everyday person could prepare them. But were everyday citizens preparing *béchamel* sauces?

An Exploration of the Intended Audience

In the very first paragraph of *L'Art de la Cuisine*, Carême sets the tone for the rest of his manual by dedicating the series to Mme. La Baronne de Rothschild. After completing over *thirty years* of diligent experimentation, note-taking and refinement, he decides to present his text to this woman. Above all the other chefs who no doubt inspired him in the kitchen, La Baronne received the dedication.¹⁶⁰ By excluding such influential chefs in his life as Bailly, Carême has set the tone for his book that is focused less from the beginning on cooking and more on manners and aesthetic. Referring to himself as an artisan (“man devoted to the development of arts and crafts”),¹⁶¹ La Baronne could be considered as a sort of patroness who has provided inspiration and support for the chef. Whether or not she gave Carême financial support in his writing endeavors remains unclear. Regardless of whether or not she was a financial patroness, she definitely acted as a source of strong inspiration as her home was a “model of elegance and of sumptuousness.”¹⁶² He thanks La Baronne not only for her support but for being a shining example of someone who appreciates refined taste and the importance of outward appearances. Carême was more than just a groundbreaking technician in the kitchen – he was someone who had, through his time in elite kitchens, come to value good aesthetic taste. When he put on a

¹⁶⁰ Carême states that the books are the result of thirty years of practice and experience: « le résultat de trente années de pratique et d'expérience, » *L'Art de la Cuisine Française*, 1981, Vol. 1, lv.

¹⁶¹ Carême, *L'Art de la Cuisine Française*, 1981, Vol. 1, «...les hommes qui se sont dévoués aux développements des arts et métiers de dédier le fruit de leurs travaux aux personnes dont le goût fin et délicat savait apprécier leurs méditations, » v.

¹⁶² Carême, *L'Art de la Cuisine Française*, 1981, Vol. 1, « ...sa maison...un modèle d'élégance et de somptuosité, » vi.

dinner party, every detail was meticulously thought out. The host or hostess played an integral part in putting on the most elaborate and well-executed dinner parties. Carême knew that though he was not the social host at elite parties for which he prepared meals, but he was responsible for everything behind the scenes. His arrangement of silverware, china, serving platters and centerpieces all played a vital role in how smoothly a dinner party would go and how the guests would remember the hosts. Just as he laid out in the aphorisms – every person played a vital role in contributing towards the smooth and effective execution of a dinner party.

Following this dedication to La Baronne, Carême goes on to thank Lady Morgan, an English socialite, and includes a short story entitled the “Historical and Culinary Notice on the Manner in which Napoleon lived on Saint Helena.”¹⁶³ This note, stemming from a conversation Carême had with one of Napoleon’s chefs, M. Chandelier, describes the food which the Emperor enjoyed while in exile. I question the origins and validity of such a document seeing as Carême fails to mention in which context he received the information. He only says that his friend M. Chandelier assured him of the truth of the story. In any case, the story reflects Napoleon in a negative light, showing that his staff was poorly treated and that the Emperor’s demeanor was insufferable: “the servants of this big man deplored his sad existence, being tyrannized without fail by the bad practices of the governor of the island.”¹⁶⁴ I can only assume that Carême included such a discourse to reiterate his own negative attitude towards Napoleon and gain popular support from the readers. At the time that he wrote this story (1830), France was in a state of transition as the people were becoming increasingly angry over Charles X’s policies which gave more power to the clergy and the aristocracy. The July Revolution of 1830 marked a

¹⁶³ Carême, *L’Art de la Cuisine Française*, 1981, Vol. 1, « Notice Historique et Culinaire sur la Manière dont vivait Napoléon à Sainte-Hélène, » xxi.

¹⁶⁴ Carême, *L’Art de la Cuisine Française*, 1981, Vol. 1, « Les serviteurs de ce grand homme déploraient sa triste existence, étant sans cesse tyrannisé par les mauvais procédés du gouverneur de l’île, » xxvi.

turning point at which the last Bourbon ruler was finally forced to abdicate and Louis Philippe I was proclaimed king by the Chamber of Deputies. The fact that Carême disapproves of Napoleon's demeanor and sheds light on his behavior in exile is pertinent for the time period when the general population held strong anti-monarchy sentiments. Perhaps his inclusion of the story was an effort to gain popular support and make him more of an approachable character for the middle classes.

A majority of the content of Carême's five volumes consists of detailed instructions on how to make different preparations of such foods as fish, consommés, soups, and meat and game. It is in these instructional sections that the reader can learn how to emulate Carême's creativity and mastery of the ingredients. But who could this information have been of use to?

I want equally for the housewife to find in my book something that occupies her leisure: in reading, she will discover an infinite number of easy things to execute; she can instruct her cook on these sensual tastes; she can prepare succulent dishes with her own hands, which will bring her the kindest praise from her guests. By this result, she can enrich her table with an infinite number of different things that are less expensive; she can manage her dinner herself when her family and friends come to visit.¹⁶⁵

Carême intended, first, for this book to be of use to the housewife in any proper bourgeois or upper class home. We can extrapolate that the housewife would be of either status because Carême references how the book could be useful for the housewife's cook as if it were implied that she would have a household cook. It is to be assumed that a household with a chef was one of at the very least middle-class stature. The above passage references his intention that housewives both learn how to prepare meals themselves if they found themselves in need of entertaining, or they could pass the information on to their staff in order to better educate them

¹⁶⁵ Carême, *L'Art de la Cuisine Française*, 1981, Vol. 1, « Je veux également que la ménagère trouve dans mon livre de quoi occuper ses loisirs: sa lecture lui découvrira une infinité de choses faciles à exécuter; elle pourra instruire sa cuisinière sur ses goûts sensuels; elle pourra préparer de ses propres mains des mets succulents, qui lui attireront les plus douces louanges de la part de ses convives. Par ce résultat elle pourra enrichir sa table d'une infinité de choses variées et peu coûteuses; elle pourra diriger elle-même son dîner le jour où elle recevra sa famille et ses amis, » lvii.

(“instruire sa cuisinière sur ses goûts sensuels”). Maybe he thought the book would be best served if bought and read by wealthy housewives. Or, perhaps he thought that wealthy women would be the only ones who *would* buy it, hence his reasoning for mentioning them first. It is hard to say. But it is fair to say that Carême did not discount the idea that his book could be of use to people beyond the uppermost echelon of society. Though he states first that he envisioned his book to be used by wealthy bored housewives to quite literally fill their leisure time, he goes on to say that he saw his book being used by a host of other people.

...the interpretation of my book will be helpful to people of all fortunes and to all the people who love by taste to see to the preparation of their cooking, first necessity of private and social life...My book is not thus written only for the large houses...I want, on the contrary, for it to become to be generally useful.¹⁶⁶

In a remarkably inclusive manner, Carême recognizes that not everyone can afford the ingredients for which some of the recipes call. He is sure to address the fact that if the readers' financial situations prohibit their ability to buy certain ingredients, then that should not hinder their desire to try other recipes or even alter the recipes to include less expensive products. He offers suggestions throughout the series for substitutes of ingredients and admits that not all recipes are applicable to everyone. It is precisely this pragmatism which makes Carême unique from his gastronomic counterparts – he remains realistic about the eccentricities of upper class meals and the fact that not everyone can afford certain luxuries. He recognizes that just because maybe middle class families cannot afford certain ingredients, it does not have to inhibit the emphasis they place on standards of good taste. Instead of producing a book which would showcase, or rather flaunt, what he saw and learned working in luxurious homes, he tries to appeal to a broader population by expressing that he understands the reality of their lifestyles and

¹⁶⁶ Carême, *L'Art de la Cuisine Française*, 1981, Vol. 1, « ...la lecture de mon livre rendra d'importants services à toutes les fortunes et à toutes les personnes qui aiment par goût à s'occuper de la préparation de leur cuisine, première nécessité de la vie privée et sociale...Mon livre n'est donc point écrit que pour les grandes maisons...je veux, au contraire, qu'il devienne d'une utilité générale, » lviii-lvix.

is sympathetic, but not condescending towards them. What proves to be important to Carême is, as he states, the way the food is prepared and not necessarily the luxuriousness of the ingredients used. He is trying to inspire curiosity and creativity through his books, by encouraging people to know their means but to always make the most with what they have. Though, he adds, if it is within the means of a good bourgeois family to buy such ingredients as truffles, then, it is worth their while to buy them. In all cases, Carême insisted that the way the food was prepared be more important than the money spent on ingredients or fanciful table décor. This idea of simple and yet perfectly prepared food was a modern concept for the time; already we see Carême starting to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. As he continues with his introduction, he outlines more specifically what he means by preparing food more simply:

I would like that, in our beautiful France, every citizen would be able to eat succulent dishes...I propose thus to serve from now on four courses instead of eight, and to serve them one after the other, they will be hotter and better...one should only serve on the table as small a dessert as one can offer...the *milieu* (space) of the table would be reserved for alternately placing the service of the dinner.¹⁶⁷

Carême outlines precisely the changes he foresees in his creation of *la cuisine moderne* – what it will involve, how it differs from traditional cuisine, who will have access to it and why it matters. First, he would like for “every citizen in France to be able to eat succulent dishes.” We see Carême, for the first time, trying to appeal to a broad audience. Further, he begins to lay groundwork for a complete transformation in gastronomy by calling for the restructuring of meal service and number of courses. His use of the phrase “from now on” (*desormais*) marks a period of transition. He commands the attention of the audience with an authoritative certainty that they are entering a new territory which he is about to lay out. This is crucial to understanding

¹⁶⁷ Carême, *L'Art de la Cuisine Française*, 1981, Vol. 1, « Je voudrais que, dans notre belle France, tout citoyen pût manger des mets succulents...je proposerai donc de servir désormais quatre mets au lieu de huit, et de les servir l'un après l'autre, ils en seront plus chauds et meilleurs...on devrait seulement servir sur la table le peu de dessert que l'on pourrait offrir...le milieu de la table serait réservé pour y poser tour à tour le service de cuisine, » Ivix.

Carême's intentions in writing the book. He is "proposing" a change, marking that he rejects previous traditions and structures and is calling for a *new* order. He proceeds with his stipulations: cutting the number of courses in a meal from the traditional eight to a mere four. Is he insane? How dare he challenge what had been for the previous one hundred years an institution of dinner party meal service? But apologize for trudging new territory he does not – rather, he demands the change. That there only be four courses is but the first of many demands. Each course will directly follow one another from now on so as to be enjoyed while they remain warm. And in what the modern-day reader may see as the most non-French request, Carême suggests that modern cuisine food service would include only a "little bit" of dessert. He then lays out the proper order in which to serve which dishes.

To start, he suggests a good soup. Further, he expects a variety of soups and encourages his readers to be creative – vegetable soups, and soups with rice, bread and tapioca are all encouraged. After the first course, the meal continues with a large piece of meat, preferably beef and an accompanying sauce. Following the meat, Carême calls for a fish dish, then a pastry of sorts, salad and dessert. (Note that he calls for a small amount of dessert to be served and yet expects there to be courses for pastries and dessert). Clearly, simply because there were only going to be four courses did not mean that there would be a lack of food. With that, Carême has firmly established a new order. He need not spend pages belaboring his intent – he commands attention and in a mere two pages has set the premise for what he hopes to be a change into a more modern way to eat.

Carême's humble childhood and need for resiliency and self-reliance from a young age is perhaps the reason why he was able to connect so well with the general populace. Unlike Grimod de la Reynière, he was not raised in a luxurious home bordering the Champs-Elysees.

And unlike Brillat-Savarin, he was not formally schooled and never learned to practice law. He was a humble man who gained exposure gradually to some of the most extravagantly wealthy people in France between the years 1810 and 1825. Through his experiences in the kitchens of such wealthy noblemen as Talleyrand and M de Rothschild, Carême not only perfected his craft, but worked tirelessly to stay innovative. The result of his more than thirty years of practice in the kitchen, his epic book *L'Art de la Cuisine Française* is the perfect demonstration of the crossroads of traditional values and an eye towards modernity. His endless explanations of techniques and inclusion of such transformational recipes as *les grandes sauces* have made his work indelible and everlasting.

Conclusion

Modern French Cuisine and Emerging Bourgeois and National Identities

The twenty-first century historian or anthropologist would be hard pressed to deny the intrinsic role that food plays in defining individual and collective identities for cultures and societies worldwide. Food provides more than sustenance; it provides a reason for people to congregate and share in an experience. People begin, sustain and break relationships around the table – the ideal space where food is presented, consumed and appreciated. Food makes people feel connected to ingredients on a personal level and thus connected to their bodies and their overall sense of self. The food we eat determines the daily rhythm with which we live our lives. Beyond it being a fulfilling and necessary part of our individual lives, food also makes people feel connected to others. Be it a small group of friends gathered in a crowded apartment, a large family sprawled in a park for a reunion, or a newly-acquainted couple out to dinner, the food we eat with others and the setting in which we share it strengthens the bond of collective experience.

The food that we choose to consume thus defines us individually and collectively on a very personal level. No two people's relationships with food are the same. We eat what we eat based on where we live, what is available to us, how we can most easily access it, and what we can afford to prepare. Choosing what we eat (for those of us who have the luxury to do so) sustains us on a mental, physical and spiritual level. Because it harnesses and evokes such powerful emotions, food is a link that binds us to others in ways that few other things or experiences can, excepting perhaps ties of friendship, family, sex or marriage. Undoubtedly, the French people prove to be a remarkable example of how dominant a role food can play in

identity construction. French culture is almost synonymous with such items as the baguette and pain au chocolat, escargot and foie gras. And, I would argue that the evolution of cuisine in the wake of the Revolution of 1789 was the turning point at which these foods (and also manners, techniques and practices) became so inherently *French*.

Grimod de la Reynière, Brillat-Savarin and Carême found food to be intrinsic to defining the individual because each step of the process in preparing and presenting the meal was a direct reflection of a person's manners and sense of taste. Each author penned works of gastronomic literature that outlined manners of proper eating and etiquette in styles that were at the same time didactic and approachable.¹⁶⁸ I would argue that these authors were (perhaps except Carême who wrote later than the other two authors) not writing outright exclusively for a *bourgeois* audience. Rather, more discreetly, the set of manners of “good taste” that they promoted gradually became characteristics of the bourgeoisie as a social class. All three authors were trying to appeal to, I would argue, what the twenty-first century historian would call the distinguished “bourgeoisie,” though at the time they were writing (especially Grimod) the bourgeoisie was not even a cohesive entity. Thus, it is more right to say that the works of Grimod de la Reynière, Brillat-Savarin and Carême helped to *define* rather than *appeal to* an emerging bourgeoisie.

For Brillat-Savarin, the pleasures of the table were multifaceted. The table created a space for reciprocal enjoyment and fulfillment as he describes in *Physiologie du goût*: “...we often find assembled round the same table all the modifications that a highly developed sociability has introduced amongst us – love, friendship, business, speculation, influence,

¹⁶⁸ I would argue that all three authors geared their writing towards men and were not writing to define manners of eating for women. Despite Brillat-Savarin mentioning that women could be gourmands, the fact of the matter remains that early nineteenth-century French society upheld expectations for women to conform to traditional gender roles. Women were not able to participate in true “gourmand” culture.

solicitations, patronage, ambition, intrigue...this is why conviviality affects everything: this is why it produces fruits of every savour.”¹⁶⁹ Brillat-Savarin’s guide to taste was applicable to the gastronome who dined in his home or in public; and in both cases the gastronome could be fulfilled by the pleasures of the table in an endless number of ways. His book *Physiologie du goût* remains arguably the most comprehensive guide to the overall demeanor and aesthetic which the “modern” (early nineteenth-century) gastronome was meant to embody.

As Brillat-Savarin’s literature emphasized mannerisms and behavior, Carême’s works had the most impact on identity construction from a technical standpoint. *L’Art de la cuisine Française* in particular had the longest lasting impression on the techniques of modern cuisine with his introduction of sauces and reorganization of courses. It was truly Carême who laid out the foundations for what he himself called modern cuisine. The other authors were crucial because their works allowed for a bourgeois gourmand mentality to emerge, but it was Carême who redefined the actual manner in which food was prepared. No doubt his expertise in the kitchen over years of tutelage and apprenticeship allowed for him to develop the necessary skills to write books on cuisine with such authority. But, I would argue, he became a revolutionary figure because he had an inquisitive personality and constant desire to try new recipes, as well as a distinct humility after being raised in poverty and becoming a successful chef. Grimod de la Reynière did not write solely for his fellow aristocrats, the class into which he was born. Quite the contrary; he published his yearly *Almanach des Gourmands* to share his expertise and skill with his readers. He encouraged the bourgeoisie to be knowledgeable consumers. His literature concentrated on stories about ingredients and described in detail their flavors and where to purchase those of the highest quality in Paris.

¹⁶⁹ Brillat-Savarin, Crowninshield translation, *The Physiology of Taste*, 143.

Through the power of text, these three authors effectively created a collective discourse and set of manners that bourgeois men could embrace and share. The path to becoming a true gourmand required little more than the application of the principles and characteristics outlined in these texts. The emergence of the restaurant and the café as public destinations to eat led to the ability for the bourgeoisie to emerge into the public sphere with a new attitude in tow to put on display. Dinner parties held in private homes were another setting where the bourgeois gastronome could take center stage. Grimod de la Reynière, Brillat-Savarin and Carême realized the importance of a deep-seated appreciation for food, and more than that, an appreciation for interpersonal relationships that could be maintained through dining. And it was this knowledge that they wished to impart on the reader. Food and the way in which it was consumed by the “gourmands” they were trying to create became a marker of identity.

The creation of modern cuisine provided a sense of unity for members of the bourgeoisie. The aesthetic of the “gourmand” (the judge of this new cuisine) became a marker of the bourgeoisie that rejected aristocratic notions of exclusion. This gourmand needed money, but not an abundance of wealth; he needed a deep appreciation for the pleasures in life (especially eating); he needed to be educated in order to tell whimsical stories and be a lively entertainer; and he needed to have overall good taste. Grimod de la Reynière, Carême and Brillat-Savarin all outlined their own interpretations of good taste, but for the most part they all encouraged men to be knowledgeable about the best food products available to them within their means and to be excited about food. This meant that they needed to be discerning about food purchased from local vendors or merchants, and they had to be able to enjoy the simple pleasures of a basic sauce as well as delicacies like chocolate and truffles.

Modern cuisine in early nineteenth-century France helped the bourgeoisie to build a collective identity because it provided a set of common rituals and recipes which they could follow and participate in collectively and more or less equally. The texts of Grimod de la Reynière, Brillat-Savarin and Carême are pragmatic manuals; any good upstanding bourgeois so long as he had money and a true sense of good taste (and a desire to learn) could become a gourmand by reading and embracing the aesthetic and manners outlined therein.

Underlying Contradictions: the nature of early nineteenth-century French society

The texts written by the three gastronomes in this thesis highlight a few themes such as identity formation and the construction of taste; they also shed light on the class tensions at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Despite the fact that each author came from a different socio-economic background, they each wrote with the intention of appealing to a limited group of people.

Grimod de la Reynière, born into an aristocratic family, rejected elite notions of frivolity and unnecessary ritual and the lifestyle of his wealthy parents. His gaudy dinner parties that at first glance made him appear as a childish, disgruntled rebel were actually a smart and modern way for him to reject traditional notions of taste characteristic of pre-Revolutionary French aristocratic society. Driven by a sincere passion for dining and enjoying high quality food, he founded a private society with his closest friends wherein he judged the fare from local restaurants. Though he rejected the exclusive nature of traditional cuisine in the Ancien Régime, Grimod de la Reynière's *Société Epicurienne* was itself an exclusive group of jurors that partook

in a private set of ritual practices. The inner workings of the group's meetings were laid out in the monthly *Journal des gourmands*, but the reader could only participate from afar. Grimod de la Reynière viewed himself and his group as the ultimate authorities on good taste and there was an intrinsically elitist nature to both his dinner parties and society of jurors. The fact that he critiqued aristocratic society and yet partook in highly exclusive and ritualized behavior himself signifies the inherent contradictions of his work. Perhaps he did not intend on shaping a uniquely "bourgeois" identity through his texts, but he did inspire new manners of taste and a rejection of aristocratic manners. The manners of good taste that he championed and that he impressed upon the reader through his texts became indicative of bourgeois culture and identity as it developed later on in the nineteenth century.

Born into an upstanding middle-class family, Brillat-Savarin remained a wealthy bourgeois lawyer for the majority of his life. Though he intended for his book to be used by a wide audience and stated outright that he thought gourmandise to be an aesthetic that actually "linked" society, his writing is full of inherent contradictions. Simply because he envisioned a society where all men (and even potentially women) could be gourmands and learn to appreciate the endless power and profundity of good food, cuisine, and the overall eating experience, he never intended for his book to be accepted by the lower classes. I would argue, though, that he did intend for his book to be a manual for the good upstanding member of the bourgeoisie in that it laid out a set of guidelines for appreciating things of "good taste." I would even venture to argue that Brillat-Savarin was trying to appeal to the layered and intricate levels of the bourgeoisie and promote one homogenous bourgeoisie that had a similar set of manners and could at least be united in one thing: their ability to be critical gourmands.

Carême is somewhat of an outlier among the three gastronomes. He was the only trained chef and he was born into absolute poverty. Gradually he rose to success by fighting his way into kitchens and eventually working for some of the most well-known aristocrats in France (like the Rothschilds). His final work *l'Art de la cuisine Française* was intended to be used by people of all classes, as he himself envisioned a “modern cuisine” that did not differentiate between class lines. It is difficult to say whether or not he was writing for a distinctive bourgeoisie but if any of the three remotely succeeded in reaching a broad audience, it would have been Carême.

They are considered the “founders” of modern gastronomy because their ideas were *new*. They were inventors who described an aesthetic that was *unique* for their time period. Appealing to a society that was in flux, they were active participants in *shaping* the evolving bourgeoisie. Each author was writing for a unique audience and for various reasons rejected accepted manners of socializing to some respect and wanted to “re-write” new manners and habits onto which people could grasp. Each author represents, above all else, the extent to which early nineteenth-century French society was ever-evolving and the definition of class lines was blurred. Their works were revolutionary for their time because they rejected traditional notions of cuisine but also of *taste*. In promoting a new aesthetic, they created the mannerisms which became characteristic of a bourgeois identity and paved the way for the creation of modern cuisine which helped to form a national French identity. Thanks to Grimod de la Reynière, Brillat-Savarin and Carême, and their fascinating and intricate pieces of gastronomic literature, a uniquely bourgeois, and eventually an indelibly French, set manners and forms of taste emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century. So cheers, to these three men and their ambitious gastronomic agendas – whose writing helped inspire a love of cuisine and country, both in France in the nineteenth century and all over the world to this day.

Appendix: Chronology

- 1789: French Revolution begins with the storming of the Bastille
- 1792: Louis XVI is tried for treason and convicted; monarchy abolished
- 1793: Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette are guillotined in Paris
- 1799: Napoleon Bonaparte enters Paris and is crowned First Consul; takes the title of Emperor Napoleon I in 1804
- 1803-1812: Grimod de La Reynière publishes eight volumes annually of *L'Almanach des gourmands*
- 1806: Grimod de la Reynière begins publishing the monthly newsletter *Journal des gourmands et des belles*
- 1808: Grimod de La Reynière writes *Manuel des Amphitryons*
- 1814: Congress of Vienna
- 1814-1824: Reign of Louis XVIII (absolute monarchy)
- 1824-1830: Reign of Charles X (constitutional monarchy)
- 1825: Brillat-Savarin publishes *Physiologie du goût* in December, two months before his death
- 1826: Brillat-Savarin dies on February 2 in Paris
- 1830-1848: Reign of Louis Philippe I (parliamentary monarchy)
- 1833: Carême writes three volumes of *L'Art de la Cuisine Française au XIXème siècle* (the final two volumes were compiled and published after his death by Armand Plumerey)
- 1833: Carême dies in January
- 1837: Grimod de La Reynière dies on December 25
- 1848-1851: 2ème République, Napoleon I's nephew Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte becomes President of the Republic
- 1852: Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte crowned Emperor Napoleon III

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