The Gastronomic man and Georgia’s food culture

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Abstract: Eating and drinking are often described as activities that people practice when they need to get the life-supporting supply of nourishment that is necessary for survival. Eating and drinking are basic, right at the bottom of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. According to this model, people must first satisfy these needs before devoting energy to satisfying other needs that are higher up in the hierarchy. But are food and drink really as simple as that? In the following, first I shall analyze the factors that I consider to be very important and decisive for what, when and how people eat and drink what they do. Second I will present some part of the Georgian food culture and third test the factors (the gastronomic man) on Georgia’s food culture and see what factors are important and who are not.

Keywords: diet, food culture, gastronomy, eating habits, edibility

Let us begin by looking at the meaning of words that are connected with food and drink. The word diet, which is absolutely central, means a combination of the different kinds of foods that are consumed daily to meet a person’s need for nourishment. The form of the diet can vary but should be sufficient for nutritional needs, provided the various foods are combined in a suitable way. The word diet comes from the Greek word diæta, meaning way of life or lifestyle. Today it has come to mean a special combination of foodstuffs, consisting usually of protein, carbohydrates, fat, vitamins, minerals, water and fibre, or roughage. Every diet should be suited to a person’s age, sex and physical activity. For various reasons, some people need larger quantities of some of these components than others, or should avoid some of them altogether. Our diet consists of various kinds of foodstuffs, products that are used to make our food and drink (Nationalencyklopedin website, word diet).

Generally speaking, food is divided into two main groups: vegetables, which come from the plant kingdom, and meat, which comes from the animal kingdom. Some of these foodstuffs can be eaten without cooking, such as fruit and certain vegetables, while others need to be prepared by, for example, being baked, roasted, grilled or boiled. Now that I have come to the preparation of food, it is time to talk about the art of cooking which, in Sweden at least, has come to mean the technique and art of preparing food. In turn, the word food means what has been prepared for eating by human beings. A term we often come across in connection with food is the word gastronomy. This word comes from the Greek gastronomia meaning knowledge of the stomach. It came into English via the French gastronomie, which was first used in France in the early 19th century. In modern usage, this word has come to mean the science of high-class cooking (Nationalencyklopedin website, word gastronomy).

Needs

Human beings are by nature physical beings and their bodies are dependent on nutrition or food of a certain composition. The supply has to be provided fairly regularly because their ability to store food is limited. Their working capabilities depend on both physique and the supply of food (Bringéus, 1988:12).
Edibility
The term eating habits holds the answer to the question why people eat what they do. Habits in themselves mean that certain food is so self-evident that people eat it continually, while rejecting that which they find foreign, or eating it with caution. Individual eating habits do not have much to do with the individual’s personal taste; they are shared with those of the members of the family and the people living in the neighbourhood. The repetitive element in human eating habits is not restricted to a person’s private life; it belongs to the cultural heritage of mankind and is remarkably stable. Studies of eating habits carried out in the US among Scandinavian immigrants show that they are faithful to their Scandinavian Christmas fare even in the third and fourth generation, long after they have stopped speaking their native language (Bringéus, 1988:13-16).

An important factor in the edibility of food is the technology of all the different ways of getting food: hunting, fishing, cattle farming, agriculture, industry and so on. If this broad term is applied to a more local level in the community, it becomes more limited, comprising food preparation techniques such as preserving, butter-making, cheese-making, baking, brewing, distilling and so on. These techniques are very ancient as well as being essential for life since many of nature’s resources will only keep for a limited time in their natural state (Bringéus, 1988:13-16).

Ideology is another factor affecting the edibility of foodstuffs for human beings. An ideology in itself is governed by various factors like religion, medical concepts or moral concepts. In religion, it is the rites that are the visible or practical aspect of the ideology that govern to a great extent what is considered edible or not; such rites often originate in religious writings. An interest in eating habits based on medical aspects existed even in antiquity. A similar interest based on moral aspects is found in the temperance movement, which classifies wine and spirits as poisons, and not as a source of pleasure (Bringéus, 1988:13-16).

Availability
The availability of raw materials and foodstuffs also plays an important role when people choose what food to eat. In turn, availability is dependent on factors like nearness, economics and regulations. The geographical location of different foodstuffs is important for what ends up on our plates. Foodstuffs that have been transported over long distances are naturally more expensive than local products, which is where the economic factor comes in. Our choice of foodstuffs and raw materials is connected with our own financial state. Finally, regulations also affect the availability of food; the food rationing system introduced during the world wars exemplifies this factor (Bringéus 1988: 17-18).

Senses
Food appeals to at least four of our five senses. The first thing people eat with is their eyes, which is why food should look good and appetizing. The smell of food can arouse feelings of desire when you are hungry and feelings of displeasure when you are full up or if the food smells nasty. Beverages like wine can also be enjoyed via their bouquet at the beginning of a meal. Our sense of feeling tells us whether the food is hot, cold or tepid. When we chew food, we find out whether it is hard, soft, tough or tender. All these variants play a part in the right context. Our sense of taste tells us about the inner qualities of the food: whether it is sweet, salty, bitter or sour, mild or strong. All these variants are also relevant, but only in a certain order. Salty food must come first and sweet food last (Bringéus, 1988:30-31).
Gastronomic reflections
According to Brillat-Savarin, gastronomy is an organised science that is related to other sciences such as: Natural science, because of its classification of nutritious substances; Physics, because of its investigation of composition and properties; Chemistry, because of the analyses and solutions it provides. Culinary science, because it deals with the art of preparing food and making it enjoyable to the taste; Commerce, because of its discovery of methods for purchasing the materials used as cheaply as possible and disposing of what is for sale as advantageously as possible; Economics, because of the sources of income it provides for the state and the ways of exchanging goods that it opens up for people. Over and above all that, gastronomy dominates people’s lives from the cradle to the grave, as well as affecting all the social classes. The material objects of gastronomy are everything that can be eaten. The first aim of gastronomy is to keep the individual on his or her feet (Brilliant-Savarin, 1958: 15-16).

Gastronomy as a science

Physiological taste research
Perceptions of taste are aroused only when special sensory organs in the tongue, palate and throat are stimulated. Because of their appearance under the microscope, these organs are called taste buds. They consist of large, oblong cells that have protoplasmic shoots directed towards the narrow, outer taste pores. These taste cells and their fine shoots have a relatively short life — only a couple of weeks. They are replaced continuously as undifferentiated epithelial cells surrounding the taste buds develop. When these simple cells touch the specific taste nerve fibres, they are transformed into taste cells, with their microvilli and special response patterns to various kinds of stimulation. If the taste nerves are cut off, all the taste buds in the nerves’ area of distribution on the tongue disappear and return only when the taste nerve fibres on the tongue have regrown (Zotterman, 1969:11-12).

As for the signals in the taste nerves, the taste nerve fibres run from the front three-quarters of the tongue in the nerve’s large sensory nerve. However, these fibres differ from other nerve fibres in the thick nerve trunk, forming a thin nerve which, after a short distance, runs through its own bone canal in the middle ear and passes the anvil, after which it joins the facial motor nerve and passes through that nerve’s bone canal to the brainstem. Communication between the taste buds and the brain takes place via nerve fibres that send a very simple code to the brain — it has only one signal and it reaches the brain without any changes or interference. There are, however, very great individual variations in taste; that is, the way taste is perceived differs from one person to another (Zotterman, 1969:16-20).

The fact that eating is not merely something physiological but also to a high degree a social act makes food and drink an intermediary of social relations. One and the same dish will not taste differently just because it has been prepared differently but because its special taste is also determined by its social context, that is, who prepared the food, who we eat the food with and the situation in which we eat the meal (Andersson, 1980:28-29).

Recent research has shown that, in addition to the four basic tastes, salty, sour, sweet and bitter, humans can identify a fifth taste. The Japanese have known about this fifth basic taste for a long time and call it “unami”, meaning delicious, piquant. This fifth taste has to do with the taste of amino acids, for example monosodium glutamate (MNG). MNG has been used to reinforce tastes in Asia for centuries and is a normal additive in soups, for example. Scientists have now succeeded in finding receptors on the tongue that react to amino
acids, that is, umami, and that this basic taste plays a large part in the way people appreciate wine (vin & spirt journalen 3/2002:55).

The physiology of thirst
When you have a deficit of water in your body, you feel thirsty, which creates a need to drink. If this is not heeded in time, it can lead to disaster. You can go without food for weeks, but without liquids you die after only a few days. Thirst is included among the so-called general feelings. The desire to drink is triggered by a limited area in the middle brain, where there are special nerves that are sensitive to dehydration. When the water content in the blood falls, these nerves send a signal to the corpus callosum, which results in a conscious need to drink; the corpus callosum plays a vital part here, since it has been shown that animals without a cerebrum do not drink spontaneously. Only when the body’s need of liquids is satisfied does thirst disappear; it is also possible to quench burning thirst very temporarily by drinking a liquid, but if the need of liquids in the body is not satisfied, you soon feel thirsty again. This means that thirst is inhibited in two principally different ways. The act of drinking itself triggers nerve impulses in various sensory nerves in the oral cavity, throat and stomach. These impulses inhibit the feeling of thirst temporarily long before the liquid has had time to be absorbed and affect the blood’s osmotic pressure. Not until enough liquid has been absorbed for the blood’s water content to return to normal does the feeling of thirst normally disappear (Zotterman 1969:21-26).

Sociological gastronomy

Food culture
It is a physiological and biological fact that all living creatures have to eat and drink to survive. Another physiological fact is that a creature cannot eat or drink just anything. Certain organisms or species can assimilate a broad spectrum of foodstuffs while others can only live on one type of food. Human beings can, in a physiological sense, assimilate a large number of foodstuffs, which makes us omnivorous. Nevertheless, there is a great deal that the human body does not tolerate; for example, no one can drink a litre of 96 percent alcohol and survive. Thus there are physiological limitations to what can be used as human food and what cannot be used. These limits are set by nature. Such limits are broader than those set by human culture. Every society selects a part of what, according to nature, can be considered human food. This cultural definition of what can or cannot be considered food (that is, food and drink) is one of society’s fundamental norms. These norms or imprinting are something that every person is exposed to from a very early age (Andersson 1980:13-14).

The culturally defined foodstuffs vary from one society to another, so food is part of a country’s cultural character. The food culture of a country or a people is not uniform but has regional variations. These variations can be based on geography and/or economics. Societies have for a long time had two parallel cuisines. Usually one of them belongs to the broad majority of the population. From a historical point of view, this cuisine only changed marginally over the years until the arrival of refrigerating and freezing technology. The other cuisine used to belong to the elite of society — the upper classes living both in towns and in the country. This cuisine has been more receptive to variations in what is eaten and the influences have often come from abroad. The eating habits of the upper classes gradually seeped down to the cuisine of the broad majority, which in turn meant that the upper classes adopted new food habits since the previous ones were no longer reserved for them (Swahn 2000:13-15).
As if it was not enough for there to be parallel cuisines for different social classes, people have also divided up the dishes that can be prepared in their kitchens into everyday food and festive food. Festivals can be of a sad kind, such as a funeral, or of a happy kind, such as a birthday. The different ways in which meals are prepared can be traced far back in time; archaeological excavations in Sweden have traced them as far back as to the early Middle Ages (Swahn, 2000:13-15, Isaksson, 2003:272-285). However, this is presumably not unique for Sweden but rather a global phenomenon. It will be interesting to see if future investigations can prove the existence of this phenomenon in even earlier times.

Food cultures are created not only by geographical conditions but also by consumption, or perhaps the other way round, that everything people eat and drink appears as consumption. Thoughts about consumption go far back in history and have changed in time, but there are certain concepts that have always been there. One of them is that people’s needs expand and our wish to meet this expansion needs drives economic development. This means that consumption in itself is a kind of arena for social competition and identity formation. In addition, the coveted value of more exclusive consumption runs the continual risk of being weakened by people’s search for distinguishing markers (Söderberg, 2002:216, Söderlind 2003:112).

Food culture may be poor or rich, and consist of a very few dishes or an abundance of them. Regardless of poverty or abundance, there are very strict rules/norms in all cultures about what can be considered a dish or a food element. This division into what can be eaten and what cannot be eaten is both fundamental and extremely emotionally charged. An example is that during famine years in Sweden (historically speaking) people did not eat edible fungi because people in the society of that time did not consider that fungi had any connection at all with food. People starved rather than eat fungi. However, food culture does not consist merely of a number of food elements; it not only has limited boundaries but also has strict rules within the culture itself as to what food elements can be combined only in a certain way to be counted as a dish. For example, in Sweden, meatballs, lingonberry jam, sauce and potatoes are an accepted combination. Recipes are the grammar of food. The fact that food forms part of culture and is not just part of nature is a specific feature of the human race. Mankind’s ability to move from being a nature child to being civilised is expressed in its ability to modify the world according to its own intentions. Regarding food, the move from nature to culture takes place when people prepare their food, cultivating and processing it. Food acquires a cultural hallmark with the aid of various utensils like pots and pans and the like. Making food is a cultural act in which a connection occurs between the food and the person preparing it. In turn, a prepared meal is a dialogue between that person and the person who eats it. Meals/dishes are thus a form of communication in which the eater eats more than what is on the plate (Andersson, 1980-14-16).

Because our relationship to food is formed early in life (when we are still infants), tastes are people’s most conservative preferences. Eating habits are the last ones we change. This becomes very evident when we move from one country to another. We learn the new country’s language and customs but we prefer to eat the food we grew up with. Eating habits are something that develops in a socioeconomic and cultural environment and are what is easiest to take from our own culture when we move to a new country. In the big cities of southern countries, the meal schedule in the summer often consists of an almost nonexistent breakfast, a small lunch, and a largish snack of biscuits, sandwiches and the like eaten around 6 –7 p.m. The big dinner is eaten after 9 p.m.. In the countryside in these countries, the day begins very early with a big breakfast, and during the day there is a large number of snacks before the evening, when the main meal of the day is eaten. When an immigrant meets the new country’s customs and eating habits, his or her eating habits change on two levels. The first level involves changing the traditional combination of foodstuffs; in other words, the gastronomy itself changes. Because new foodstuffs are incorporated into the diet, the meals
are given a different nutritional content than before. Level two is connected with the mealtimes. With some delay, the immigrant starts to choose new foodstuffs and the mealtimes gradually begin to agree with the times at which the host country eats (Kocktürk-Runefors 1990: 391, Kocktürk 1999:12).

Food is classified as staple food and supplementary food. Staple food is, for example, bread, potatoes, rice, pasta and the like, while supplementary food is, for example, various kinds of meat, dairy products and vegetables. The gastronomic tradition of every culture comprises and is defined by its foodstuffs. These are seen to be the “real” foodstuffs that the people have a strong emotional bond with, since they are the ones they know best. Since there is this strong bond between the people and their foodstuffs, they are only to a very limited extent affected by migration. People’s bonds to supplementary food are not equally strong as they are not so necessary for the survival and continuance of the traditional eating habits. Supplementary food is usually used to reinforce the taste of the staple food. This group of foodstuffs is influenced almost immediately after migration as people do not have such a strong bond with them. Studies have shown that the consumption of sweet products, new sources of fat, snacks, drinks, ice cream and so on increases among immigrants, who otherwise continue to choose the same staple foods and the same kinds of meat, dairy products and vegetables as they used in their home countries (Kocktürk 1999:392-395).

This means that the eating habits of immigrants change in a fixed order, within which cultural/psychological bonding and reinforced taste form two extreme poles along a continuum. When a traditional meal is to be made in the new country, the choice of foodstuffs swings from the cultural/psychological pole to the pole that concerns taste. Staple foods that are known are retained as they provide a sense of security in a foreign environment. When new foodstuffs are added to the diet, the selection mechanism moves in the other direction; the aspect of taste is given priority. Immigrants introduce the host country’s most tasty foodstuffs first, like sweets, nuts and new sources of fat. After sweets and fats have been incorporated, foodstuffs that have a stronger cultural bond are selected, like meat and dairy products. Staple foods are those that are changed last, if ever. Immigrants’ adaptation of their diet to the new culture is total and complete only when the immigrant population completely accepts the new country’s staple foods. However, immigrant groups retain their staple foods for several generations, so total adaptation to a new diet takes a very long time, even up to 100 years (Kocktürk 1999:392-395).

However, it is not just eating habits that change after migration; so do meal times. This is because, when the pattern of work and leisure time changes, meal times also change for immigrants so that they fit in with the pattern that exists in the new host country. Here, too, a feeling of security and identification with their culture plays an important and strong role in immigrant groups. Thus the meal that is most strongly charged with emotion is changed last, while the meals that are more neutral or connected with changes in taste are changed first. The first change is that the eating of snacks between meals and the consumption of soft drinks increases rapidly among newly arrived immigrants (with negative consequences for their teeth). The second change occurs in the meal that is considered least culturally significant, namely breakfast. Immigrants come into contact with the host country’s eating traditions through this meal. The evening meal or the occasion when the family get together is reserved in order to strengthen the feelings of family and security in each of the family members. In other words, immigrant families prefer their home country’s food for dinner, and this meal changes last. Looking at the way the diet changes during the week, it is the working days that are affected first, while Sundays are reserved for the eating habits of the home country. The food eaten at festivals is that which changes absolutely last (Kocktürk 1999:392-395).

**Religious beliefs and meals**
Festive meals in a country are often governed by ancient religious beliefs and traditions. In this respect, religion stands for an ideology that controls the choice of food at these festivals. In Sweden, this is exemplified by the eating of “semlor” (Lenten cream buns) before Easter. This tradition dates back to the Catholic celebration of Easter, beginning with 40 days of fasting during Lent, preceded by Shrove Tuesday, which is the last day before Lent. This was the day of feasting when people gorged themselves with sweetmeats of various kinds before the fasting started. Fasting before festivals takes place/has taken place in many religions. Religious fasting seldom involves total abstinence from food. What usually happens is that the practising individual eats fewer calories than the normal intake; in other words, people abstain from meat, fat and sweets. There is, however, a stricter form of religious fasting that practises abstention from all animal products, sometimes called ascetic fasting. Very often religion is more than just a faith in God for religious people; it permeates their whole existence so that they conduct their life according to the rules of the religion. Most religions have rules about how people should and must deal with their food. These rules regulate what can be eaten and what cannot be eaten, how animals should be treated when they are slaughtered and how foodstuffs should be handled and prepared (Westblom-Jonsson, 1997:19-21).

Even those people who were not members of an established religion but believed in the so-called folklore were governed by these eating rules. Belief in fate plays a central role in folklore, which means that the ideas that control eating can be seen as a way of appeasing or controlling fate. Some researchers claim that the custom of taking a gift with you when you are invited to a family is based on the idea that it was harmful to come empty-handed to a woman who was about to give birth. The food that was taken to women who were lying in may be seen as an offering to the powers of birth and fate. After a child had been christened, it had to be given bread so that bread would never be lacking in the child’s future life. That is why bread was also placed in its swaddling clothes. If a child had been weaned, it was not allowed to breastfeed again since it would then run the serious risk of becoming a child that brought bad luck. In addition, it was considered that what a child ate could shape its character. If its mother ate and drank a lot while she was breastfeeding, the child would become a glutton and have a big appetite later in life. If it ate off a knife, it would learn to be a thief. If it ate pork from the pig’s rump, it would stop growing, and if it ate hare’s heart, it would be timid. Children should eat up everything on their plate; the last bits were called the fun bits or the power bits. It was also believed that if these fun or power bits fell into the wrong hands, the child could come to harm, because it was thought that the remains on the plate were a part of the child itself. If the whole plate was eaten up, the last cake on the cake dish could not be eaten because then the family would end up in poverty (Liukko, 1996:10-11).

Table manners, seating lists and tableware
In the late 19th century and at the turn of the century, table manners were the very symbol of the cultivated person, in which the use of cutlery played a very central role. You were not allowed to eat any dish with the hands only, not even a sandwich. However, the use of cutlery is not the only sign of cultivation at the dining table. Table manners as such form a complete institution that trains the whole body and mealtimes as interpersonal-operations. You must not sit in any old way on your chair but at the right angle and facing straight forward; you must not lean on the table with your arms or elbows; you must not chew with your mouth open; and you must not slurp or smack your lips (Anderson, 1980:20-21).

Table seating in most cultures has usually shown the guests’ relative rank. During the Renaissance and the Baroque Period, for example, royalty sat at their own table. When King Gustav III of Sweden travelled to Italy, he was accompanied by the not yet ennobled Johan Tobias Sergel, who had to eat with the servants, because only the nobility were allowed to sit at the king’s table. In peasant homes, men and women sat on opposite
sides of the table; in fact, it was often only the men who sat down to table to eat, while the women stood and ate. The master’s self-evident place was at the head of the table. The seating of the guests of honour at large dinners has changed over the years; for many years there was an upper and finer end and a lower end for the less important guests. This system changed in the 19th century, however, when the host and hostess sat opposite each other at the middle of the table with the guests of honour around them (Swahn 1999:30).

Tablecloths were introduced in the Middle Ages at the royal court and in the homes of aristocrats, clergymen and rich merchants. Laying the table was such an important part of a feast that special table-layers were needed. In the 15th century, the table was covered with several patterned cloths placed on top of each other. The bottom one was a thick cloth, a piece of tapestry or gold brocade that reached right down to the floor on all sides. On top of this was a white cloth that had been mangled so that a square pattern was created. On top of this cloth yet another white cloth was laid that was shorter than the other one and mangled with another pattern. The top cloth was changed between each course and was also used as a napkin for the guests to wipe their hands and mouth on. At the court of Erik XIV in 1562, long napkins were introduced, which were later replaced by individual napkins. The members of the Swedish royal family still have an extra small cloth placed under their covers, a reminder that those who sat at the same table could underline the difference in rank by not eating on the same cloth. When peasants were visited by the priest, a special priest’s cloth was placed on the table under his cover. At a peasant family’s table, the difference in rank between the guests could be emphasized by the host and the guests eating at a table with a cloth on it while the end of the table where the servants sat had no cloth. Until the 1930s, white damask was in principle the most usual type of tablecloth in most social classes, but then colored linen cloth with simply folded napkins became fashionable. Since the Second World War, more brightly colored tablecloths have become the rule (Swahn 1999:28-29).

A long napkin was a cloth that usually ran the whole length of the table. It was placed so that the plates lay on one half while the other half was folded over them, so that they were not be dirtied by things falling down from the ceiling — which often had holes in it — even though the table was laid several days before the dinner. When the guests came to the table, the upper half of the cloth was folded down over their knees and used as a Napkin (Swahn 1999:153).

The hand towel that was used during the Middle Ages for drying your hands after washing them before the meal can be seen as a predecessor to the individual napkin. In the mid-16th century, individual napkins became prevalent on the continent, and in Sweden they were first used at the court of Erik XIV; in 1562 he had 150 such napkins. To begin with, the napkin was laid across the left arm or shoulder, but when clothes with large ruffles came into fashion, it was tied round the neck. In the 18th century, the gentlemen used to tuck it into their waistcoat while the ladies used a pin or brooch to fasten it to one shoulder or in their décolletage. This custom continued into the 19th century, but in the 20th century napkins were placed over the knees. In the 19th century, a napkin was about 80 cm square but in the 20th century it decreased to about 50 cm. The way napkins were folded has always been an important part of their use. This custom was introduced in the 16th century when forks gave napkins a new role/function as a status symbol instead of just being a necessary wiping cloth. Napkin rings and napkin holders started to appear around the 1840s. These were used mainly in middle-class homes in towns, while the upper classes used their napkins only once before they were washed, and laborers and peasants did not use them at all. There are napkins preserved in Sweden that were used in peasant homes, but they were used as shawls or for holding the prayer book when the peasants went to church. Rich farmers began to use napkins in the 1870s in Sweden, but these were mostly used for decoration under the bridal couple’s or the priest’s plates at weddings. When the guests in
these circles started to be provided with napkins, they often put them aside so as not to trouble the hostess with the need to wash them (Swahn, 1999:220-221).

In the Middle Ages, it was customary to use a slice of bread as a plate and the meal was rounded off by eating it. There were also rectangular wooden dishes that two or three people could put on their knees and eat off together. It was from these wooden dishes that both individual wooden plates (first square and later round) and table tops with a frame developed. The development from bread plates to metal or wooden dishes took place in the 15th century among the upper classes. During the reign of Erik XIV, wooden dishes disappeared from the Swedish court and were replaced by pewter or silver platters. In the 17th century, the new aristocracy could afford silver plates. Pewter continued to be the material used by the upper-middle class well into the 18th century and as late as the 17th century the lesser nobility were still using wooden plates for everyday use. During the 17th century, Sweden started to import Dutch plates made of glazed earthenware, and these became common among the upper classes during the 18th century. The difference between deep plates and flat plates emerged during the 17th century. In 1726, Sweden started its own ceramic industry when Rörstrand opened its glazed earthenware factory. In the 18th century, porcelain plates also started to be imported into Sweden thanks to the Swedish East India Company. Not long after, Sweden began its own production of porcelain (Swahn, 1999:242-243).

The spoon is the oldest eating utensil we know. A find of pottery spoons was made in Sweden that has been dated to the Stone Age. Older spoons have been found around the world that is made from bones. Silver spoons were first made in Sweden in the Middle Ages. The farmers and merchants who bought these spoons did so not to have them for everyday use but to use them as schnapps spoons at big dinners; or perhaps they served as an investment and status symbol. Those who could not afford silver spoons did with similarly shaped spoons made of brass. In the 16th century, you often took your own spoon with you in a small case or in your pocket when you went to a party. Silver spoons have changed in shape over the course of time; the earliest ones had a round bowl and a short, often cylindrical handle, topped with a large knob or, in the Middle Ages, the figure of a saint. Towards the end of the 17th century, a new type was introduced, the rattle spoon. This had a longer and flatter handle which was joined to an egg-shaped bowl in a characteristic way: The handle was pulled to a point which was soldered to the underside of the bowl. To begin with, this joint continued a long way under the bowl, looking like a rat’s tail, but during the 18th century it shrank and disappeared. When, during the 18th century, spoons and other eating utensils started to be made by pressing metal, a rich variety of models developed (Swahn, 1999: 223-224).

The knife was introduced as a part of table cutlery towards the end of the Middle Ages, but it was not common until the 17th century, and to start with only at court and among the aristocracy, when it began to be included in the case that guests took to meals. For a long time, table knives had a blade of iron while the handle was of silver or bone of some sort, often with enamel inlays. Among the upper classes, mass-produced table knives became common in the 18th century. The oldest type of table knife, like other knives, had a point so that food could be speared, but this became unnecessary when the fork came into use (Swahn, 1999:124).

Table forks gradually started to come into use at the courts of the northern Italian principalities and republics in the 14th and 15th centuries, but they were not a natural part of tableware until the 16th century, when they reached Sweden at the court of Erik XIV. Forks were usually placed alongside a table knife in the elegant cutlery cases that upper-class people took to parties. The lower classes were still without forks. In Germany, for example, there was some opposition to this new luxury item in the 16th century because superstitious
people connected them with bad luck and black magic, probably on account of their pointed prongs (everything sharp was dangerous in folklore). It was not only impolite to point at someone with your fork; you might also in some magical way harm the person you pointed at, and the clink of a fork could summon up the devil. In the aristocracy and the upper-middle class, forks spread as eating utensils during the 17th century, but it was not until the 19th century that they became common among peasants and labourers. The number of prongs on a fork has changed over the years. During the Renaissance and the Baroque Period, they had two steel prongs and a handle of bone that was often inlaid with or made of silver, often gilded. In the 18th century, the forks made of pressed silver had three prongs and in the 19th century came the fourth prong. When, during the 19th century, the lower classes started to use forks for eating, they were often made of steel and had a wooden handle (Swahn, 1999:76-77). Marine-archaeological finds from the warship Kronan, which sank off Öland in 1676, show that there were four-pronged forks in use on Swedish ships as early as that (personal communication, Einarsson, Lars, head of research Kalmar läns museum, Sweden).

Drinking vessels, like spoons, are very old and a self-evident part of every cultural inventory. Drinking vessels were first made as status symbols and for ceremonial use; in everyday life, people made do for a long time with what nature could offer – mussel shells and gourds, for example. During the Renaissance, drinking horns were inlaid with precious metals. Wood, metal, glass and ceramics were the materials used for a large number of basic designs. The wide, open, wooden drinking bowl appeared in Scandinavia during the Viking era, and this type survived for many years among Swedish peasants; you took up your drink from the bowl with a cup or a ladle. The cylindrical or slightly conical goblet became common in Sweden at the end of the Middle Ages and was made of pewter, silver or even wood. Those made of wood were shaped on a lathe and were very common in the 16th century. Glass goblets were imported from the period of the Great Migration up to the 16th century. During the 16th century, these glass goblets became cheap mass goods; 35,000 of them were smashed at Kristian IV’s coronation celebrations. Ceramic mugs or cups with a handle came much later. The earliest coffee services had no handle and became popular in the mid-18th century. Goblets with a high foot were typical of the Middle Ages and could also be made of wood. Goblets with a lid and handle became common during the Renaissance. Tankards with a handle and a lid were originally serving vessels but developed into individual drinking vessels that were very popular in the Baroque Period. These tankards were copied by the peasantry in wood. Ceramic tankards were first made in western Germany in the 16th century and were used typically in taverns until glass and porcelain had their breakthrough in the 18th century (Swahn, 1999:56-57).

Schnapps cups were small drinking vessels made of silver, pewter or wood, hemispherical in shape but with a handle and a foot. They looked most like coffee cups with a handle. These cups are mentioned in written records in the late 17th century and were used for drinking aquavit (Swahn 1999:236). Marine-archaeological finds from the warship Vasa show that such schnapps cups were in use earlier than the late 17th century. The Vasa sank in 1628 and among the artefacts found on board were schnapps cups (Söderlind 2006: 232). A tumbler was also a small, hemispherical cup for aquavit, made of silver, pewter, brass or glass. It was constructed so that it returned to an upright position if it was tipped over. It often had a silver coin in the bottom and was popular in the 18th and 19th centuries. Yet another vessel that was made for drinking aquavit was the “öronsklål”, a little bowl with a handle. These were usually made of silver. A “snibbskål” was a round drinking vessel with four lips, that it, four corners just under the rim of the bowl. These bowls were often painted red and are known to have existed as early as the 16th century (Swahn,1999:228).

Meals as events
It is rather a complicated matter to speak about meals as events since different people interpret an event in different ways. Nevertheless, there are certain factors that those who arrange a meal utilise in order to create an experience from and round the meal. The factors they work with are colour, light, sound and design (Barneknov & Östberg, 2000:18).

Colour
Colour is something that all people perceive differently because the eye sees light in different ways. When you see a colour, it is the result of different light wavelengths. The eye perceives these as different colours depending on the wavelength. Since all people perceive colours differently, a standard colour language has been developed. The system most commonly used today is the Swedish Natural Colour System (NCS). This uses six elementary colours: yellow, red, blue, green, white and black. The system describes a specific shade and the elemental colours are codes that function when it is necessary to denote an exact shade of colour. In chromatics, one speaks of hot and cold colours. Red and yellow are hot colours, blue and green are cold colours. There are objections, however, to calling red a hot colour as it is often experienced as cold, depending on the context. Chromatics says that the hot colours lie between the yellow and the red elementary colours in the colour circle and the cold colours between blue and green. Hot colours are experienced as energising and cold ones as soothing. When combining colours, it is important to be aware that colour setting can have unexpected consequences and that the colours take on a different shade than was intended. If this phenomenon is not taken into account, there may be unfortunate results, for example when putting together a menu for a restaurant. Anyone creating a mealtime experience ought to think in terms of colours so that it is an experience for all the senses. With the help of the right colours, it is possible to enhance the experience planned for the guests and to create an ambience around the meal itself (Barneknov & Östberg, 2000:18-19, 21).

Red is perceived both as a stimulating colour and as a sensuous colour but it can also be seen as a warning colour. Red in combination with yellow is thought to increase the guests’ appetites, whereas red food alone is thought to give them more energy and greater vitality. Some people think that, to avoid giving the guests high blood pressure, increased muscular strength and strong reactions, meals should not be served in a room that is furnished totally in red. Yellow is considered to be the colour of the sun, which is felt to be warm and hospitable. It is also thought to raise the level of alertness and to sharpen people’s intelligence. In combination with black, yellow gives a warning. Green is the colour of hope, of spring and of growth. It creates a feeling of calm and security. Green is felt to be pleasant. Blue is the symbol of immortality. It is cool and creates calm as well as being emotionally stimulating. Blue can also give a feeling of coldness, making people think of shade. Thus a good composition of colours with well-balanced harmonies and colour chords for sight, hearing, taste and smell can enhance the guests’ impressions, moods and experiences of the meal (Barneknov & Östberg, 2000:20-2, 36).

Light
Light is much more than just decoration; it affects the way a room is used and how an atmosphere is created when there is no daylight. Illumination affects the way we feel and is of great importance for the way we experience our surroundings as well as for the overall impression we get. Thus there are two different sources of light, artificial light and daylight. Choosing the right source of light for an environment is decisive for the success of the lighting. The choice of light also determines the character and quality of a room. There is a belief that the best illumination/source of light is that which cannot be directly observed; in other words, the source of light should not be noticed, it should only create a certain atmosphere in the room. People’s
attention is drawn to bright sources of light and these create a feeling of pleasure and have an energising effect; strong-coloured and moving illumination is felt to be unpleasant. When choosing the lighting for a room in which meals are to be taken, it is important to start with the room’s function, that is, ceiling, walls, shapes and materials. Outdoor lighting is also important as it follows the guests all the way until they are seated at the table (Barnekow & Östberg, 2000: 23-24, 34).

Sound
Since sound consists of mechanical vibrations in the air that the ear perceives, there are two sorts of sound that people hear: what is called music, that is, regular oscillations, and what is called noise, that is, irregular oscillations. A restaurant where music is played at a high tempo gets the staff to provide swifter service; this effect is part of the concept of fast-food chains. It is vital that the volume of the music does not drown the guests’ conversation. The acoustics of a room are important since poor acoustics will disturb the guests and affect their overall enjoyment of the meal. The sound that reaches the human ear consists in part of words, but the rest is reflections from walls, floor, ceiling and furnishings. When these reflections do not reach the ear at the same time, acoustic problems occur (Barnekow & Östberg, 2000: 26-27).

Design
The guests’ behaviour is influenced by the design of the room where the meal is eaten. Meals have become a social and cultural meeting place, which means that the meal and art go hand in hand. The combination of form, colour and lighting makes a whole that communicates feelings. Thus the choice of materials, furniture, porcelain, glass and cutlery is important as they are what govern how the guests perceive the room with their senses. Just as there are hot and cold colours, there are hot and cold materials; wood is felt to be warm while stainless steel is felt to be cold. How the porcelain, glass and cutlery used at a meal are designed plays a major part in the total meal experience. In other words, the cutlery has to function, both from an ergonomic view and as emotional expression; the right sort of glass has to be used for the right drink and so on (Barnekow & Östberg, 2000: 28-29).

Menus
The French word menu literally means “little table”, but this “little table” has come to mean the bill of fare in a restaurant. The phrase à la carte on a menu literally means “according to the card” and describes the dishes that can be ordered. It is a list of all the dishes available with the price given for each one. A guest who chooses from the à la carte menu is free to compose his or her own meal by selecting dishes from this menu. À la carte menu is often complementary to the day’s menu, offering the guests greater variation, but the dishes are usually rather more expensive than those on the day’s menu. À la carte menu is normally composed and printed to last a long time, listing the starters, main dishes and desserts that the cuisine can offer. This type of menu can be very extensive at large restaurants, catering for almost every kind of taste (Halling, 1994:74).

The phrase plat du jour means today’s special, often at a low price and served quickly. Having this kind of dish on the menu makes work in the kitchen more rational and effective and the chef can utilise what is on the market that particular day. Prix fixe on the menu means that there is a combination of dishes to be had at a fixed price. This type of menu is most common on Sundays and for dinner-dances. A menu with the word arrangé printed on it tells the guests that that the meal is one that has been ordered. Such specially arranged meals are ordered in advance from the head waiter. They can take various forms, but the simplest type consists of a starter and a main course, which can be added to with other dishes and drinks (Halling, 1994:74-75).
The arrangement of the dishes on the menu should be as simple as possible, clear, systematic and easy to read. The number of courses on a menu may vary, but regardless of the number, they should come in the following order: 1. cold starters, 2. hot starters, 3. soups, 4. egg dishes, 5. fish dishes, 6. meat dishes, 7. poultry dishes, 8. pastry dishes, 9. vegetable dishes, 10. desserts. If there are several fish, meat or poultry dishes on a menu, they should follow the golden rule: boiled before roast, whole before minced and light before dark (Halling, 1994:78-79).

The descriptions above show that eating and drinking is quite a complicated business; what people should choose to eat and drink on different occasions is not all that simple. A good deal of research has been carried out – and is still being carried out – on food and drink. In the above, we have tried to point out the factors that I consider important for the choice of food and drink. In short, there are many factors involved: needs, edibility, availability, the human senses, philosophical ideas, geographical and mental frontiers, economics, nurture from the very earliest years, ideology, social structure, social classes, gender, utensils and enjoyment. All this gets even more complicated when you realize that the above factors do not necessarily have the same meaning for everyone within a limited geographical area. Food culture also consists of aspects like diet, foodstuffs, culinary art and nutrition. Thinking of the original meaning of the word gastronomy (knowledge of the stomach or a summary of the rules governing the intake of food), I believe that the complexity described above can be summed up as follows: the eating and drinking man is in fact the gastronomic man.

Articol I. Georgia

Georgia (გარემო, Sakartvelo) is a transcontinental country in the Caucasus region, situated at the dividing line between Europe and Asia. The country’s geographical location with borders to the Black Sea, the modern Russian Federation, Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, has meant that through pre-history and history, it has been a crossroads between the West and the East.

Due to its location, the country has been invaded several times over the course of history, by, for example, the Greeks, Persians, and the Ottomans, to name but a few. The invasions mean that much of the antique and Islamic worldview still exists at the country’s borders—which is a unique cultural situation. The invasions have also left their footprints on Georgia’s food- and drinking traditions and habits. This has resulted in the existence of many different gastronomical and culinary branches in the foodways of Georgia today.

Consequently, I will concentrate on some staple foods of Georgia, such as wine, bread, Khachapuri and Khinkali. My research is interdisciplinary as it is based on archaeological artifacts, historical sources, photographic documentation, oral sources, and field work.

Georgia was one of the earliest Christian countries in the world which has afforded wine a certain role in the transition from pre-history into the Christian era. Wine still holds a very special place in the hearts and minds of the Georgian people. I will thus deal first of all with wine.

Wine
The beginning of human civilizations is closely connected to the development of agriculture and the history of cultivated plants, and Georgia played a crucial role in this process. One of the reasons for that is that wine culture in Georgia can be traced to early prehistoric times (Rusishvili, 2007:5, 13). Research of linguists indicates that the root of the Indo-European term for ‘wine’ - ù(e/o) iano which means wine – might derive from the Georgian word ოღონი [Rvino] (Gamkrelidze, Ivanov, 1984:647, 649-51). These linguists are of the opinion that the word would have been transferred into the Proto-Indo-European language before this language started to separate into its various branches in the fourth millennium B.C. The separation transformed the word in different ways, leading to the English ‘wine’, Italian ‘vino’, and Russian ‘вино’, to give but a few examples (Gamkrelidze, Ivanov, 1984:649-651, McGovern, 2003:33-34). The archaeological discovery of cultivated vines in Georgia supports the linguistic theory of the origin of the word ‘wine’. Cultivated grape pips have been found on the archaeological site ‘Shulaveris Gora’ (situated in the Transcaucasus region of modern Georgia).

The site is dated to sixth – fourth millennium B.C. and belongs to the Shulaveri-Shomu Tepe chalcolithic culture (Kushnareva, Chubinishvili 1970:170, Rusishvili 2007:11-12, McGovern 2003:23). Even if there is a large time span for the culture itself C14 (Radiocarbon dating is a radiometric dating method that uses 14C to determine the age of carbonaceous materials up to about 60,000 years old) analyses of the cultural layer where the pips were found gives a dating of 6625±210 years millenium B.C.(Kushnareva & Chubinishvili 1970:170). At other sites belonging to the Shulaveri-Shomu Tepe culture a ceramic vessel which had ornamentation in relief was found. The ornamentation appears to show grapes and could very well be the earliest ‘label’ for grapes and wine that we know of today. In the vessel also sediment was found that after analysis showed too consisted of wine residue (Hansen, Mirshkhulava, Guram, Bastert-Lamprichs, 2007: 13-19, Chilashvili, 2004:47-49, Sotles, 1999:58-59).

After the initial evidence of cultivated grapes and of wine-making, cultivated grape pips were found in many other archaeological sites dating to the Bronze Age, Antiquity, and the Middle Ages. This indicates a situation of continuity in the cultivating grapes of Georgia (Rusishvili 2007:13-35). It is not until the Bronze Age that table grapes for eating are found which indicates that humans in the earlier chalcolithic societies cultivated vines and grapes for wine-making and not for eating. Wine was, therefore, the primary reason why the vine was cultivated (Personal communication, Rushivii, Nana).

It is not only grape pips that appear in the archaeological sites that can be linked to wine. At a site belonging to the Trialeti Culture (third – second millenium B.C.) a superb example of toreutic art, a silver wine cup richly decorated, was found. This cup has become known as the "Silver Cup Of Trialeti"(Kushnareva & Chubinishvili 1970:16). There is ongoing debate about what the scene depicted on the cup means. Some researchers state that it is a depiction of the God Mithra surrounded by worshipers, and of the tree of life. Others, however, are of the opinion that the depiction is that of the God Mithra surrounded by hops and worshippers drinking haoma (Kuftin, 1941:84, Jafaridze, 1981:15, Chilashvili, 2004: 67-63). Mithra means ‘contact’ or ‘pact’ and these terms are closely associated with a God known among the Persians around 1200 B.C. Mithra was understood as a personification of the sun and a God of justice. The God Mithra is often described as a forerunner of the God Mithras who became known as a very important God in Greece and Rome during Antiquity. The people of Georgia worked not only in silver during their middle Bronze Age period; they also mastered the art of working in gold as is evident from the discovery of a wine cup made of a gold sheet dating from that period. The cup, which has a double wall and hollow legs, is richly decorated.
with sardonic, lapis lazuli, red jasper, agate, and amber stones. The cup is a stunning example of glass-pasted filigree work (Jafardidze, 1981:52).

During an archaeological excavation in 2006 (Mtskheta, the old capital of Georgia) a small bronze figurine depicting a ‘Tamada’, holding a drinking horn in his right hand, was found. The figurine is dated to the beginning of first millennium B.C. (Japaridze, 2006:23). To this day; the Tamada is the toastmaster at banquets or special dinners in Georgia. The occasions on which the Tamada is present are called ‘supra’ (table). The Tamada’s main task at the supra is to salute the toasts. The Tamada is elected at the beginning of the supra and it is considered a great honour to be so selected for this function (Goldstein, 1999). A supra goes on for hours and the Tamada gives the toasts in a special order. The first toast is for the host and his family; thereafter follows a toast for the mother country of Georgia, then toast to the memory of the deceased heroes of the country and families of Georgia, followed by a toast to parents (especially mothers), friends, relatives, and the future of Georgia, to name a few of the toasts performed at a supra. Usually The guests empty their wine glasses on each toast and the glasses are filled again for the following toasts. No wine is drunk between the toasts. When the Tamada has given the last toast and rises up from the table the banquet or dinner, this is a signal that the event is over.

A special kind of artifact known as a ‘kvevris’ has been found in the course of many excavations. A kvevri is a wine vessel which became known as an amphora during Antiquity in Greece and the Roman Empire; In Georgia, however, this kind of vessels has always been termed ‘kvevris’ and still is. It is known from sites that can be dated as far back as Antiquity, that the kvevris was placed up to its neck in the ground and then filled with grape juice. The kvevris was sealed with a lid and the juice was left to ferment. The wine-farmer looked after the fermentation process until the wine was ready. The wine was then transferred to bags made of animal skins. In Georgia, there is no tradition of carrying wine in kvevris; skin bags have been used for this purpose since antiquity – perhaps even at an earlier period also. There are many reasons for this, including the fact that it was easier to carry a skin bag full of wine on one’s back than to transport a hard kvevris. Furthermore, the skin bags did not break as easily as the kvevri did during transportation on ships or in chariots. The kvevris was mainly used for during the fermentation process of the wine. However, it is evident from several archaeological sites that, during Antiquity the kvevris were also used for non-cremation burials (Chilashvili, 2004:91-105).

Georgia was one of the world’s first Christian countries, and dates such as 337 A.D. and 319 A.D. have been put forward for the country’s adoption of Christianity (Tarchnisvili, 1953:572). Georgia’s conversion to Christianity is closely linked to St. Nino. According to one tradition, St. Nino was from Kolastra, Cappadocia (in today’s Turkey) and she was a relative of St. George (the patron saint of Georgia). She was said to have come to Georgia from Constantinople. Other sources claim that she came from Rome, Jerusalem or Gaul. According to legend, St. Nino saw the Virgin Mary in a dream and she told Nino that she should enter Georgia with a cross made of the wood of vine stocks. When Nino woke up from her dream she found herself holding two pieces of wood from vine stocks and she tied them together with her own hair. With this cross made of wine she fled Roman persecution in Cappadocia and made her way into Georgia and started to teach Christianity. The legend also tells that she performed miraculous healing and converted the Georgian queen, Nana, and eventually the pagan king, Mirian III, of Iberia. Mirian III declared Christianity an official religion in c. 327 A.D. and Nino continued her missionary activities among Georgians until her death in 338 or 340 A.D (Machitadze, 2006:48-52, Wardop, 2006:12, Tarchnisvili 1953:572; Lang, 1956:13-39).
St. Nino’s tomb is still shown at the Bodbe Monastery in Kakheti – which is also the main wine region – in eastern Georgia. She has become one of the most venerated saints of the Georgian Orthodox Church and her attribute, a Grapevine cross, is a unique cross in the Christian world. Since, according to the legend, it was the Virgin Mary, who told St. Nino to go to Georgia and teach Christianity, the Grapevine cross became a symbol for and of Georgian Christianity.

Humans cannot live on wine alone and, as in the case of wine-culture, evidence for bread consumption in Georgia also goes back to the pre-historic times. Four endemic cultures of wheat were also found in the Shulaveris Gora site representative of the Shulaveri-Shomu Tepe chalcolithic culture – where the first evidence of cultivated vine was also found (Kkushnareva & Chubinishvili 1970: 170).

**Bread**

As indicated above, bread has a long tradition in Georgia, dating back to the chalcolitic period. The crop that is mainly used for bread-making in Georgia today is wheat. The Georgian word for wheat flour actually translates into English as “bread flour”.

A special oven called ‘tone’ exists in Georgia for baking bread. This kind of oven is designed to provide very high, dry heat. Fuel for the fire is provided by charcoal which lines the bottom of the structure. In order to produce temperatures approaching 900 degrees Fahrenheit (480 degrees Celsius), bakers maintain a long vigil to keep the oven’s coals continually burning. At such high temperatures, the bread made in a Tone oven develops a very crisp outer layer without sacrificing moistness on the inside (Todua, 1979:692).

One can find analogies between the ‘tone’ oven and the ‘tandoor’ oven in Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, the Transcaucaus region, the Balkans, the Middle East, Central Asia and Bangladesh. The earliest example of a tandoor oven has been found at the Harappa and Mohenjo Daro settlements of the ancient Indus Valley Civilization (2600-1500 B.C). Even so, ovens of the tandoor -type have been found in early-Harappan contexts (The Early Harappan Ravi Phase is named after the nearby Ravi River, lasted from ca 3300- 2800 BC). The
mature phase of earlier village cultures is represented by Rehman Dheri and Amri in Pakistan. Trade networks linked this culture with related regional cultures and distant sources of raw materials, including lapis lazuli and other materials for bead-making. Villagers had, by this time, domesticated numerous crops, including peas, sesame seeds, dates and cotton, as well as various animals, including the water buffalo) on the Makran coast, including at the mound site of Balakot that pre-dates the findings from the Mohenjo Daro settlements (Mohenjo-daro (Mound of the Dead) was one of the largest city-settlements of the Indus Valley Civilization of south Asia situated in the province of Sind, Pakistan. Built around 2600 BC, the city was one of the early urban settlements in the world, existing at the same time as the civilizations of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Crete). Description of ovens of this kind are also found in texts and accounts from Mesopotamia (Bottéro 2004: 47).

The word tandoor comes from the Dari words tandūr and tannūr; these are derived from very similar terms, Persian tanūr (تشور), Arabic tandūr, Turkish Tandır and Azeri word tandır. However, according to Dehkhoda Persian Dictionary the word originates from Akkadian tinūru, and is mentioned as early as in the Accadian Epic of Gilgames (reflexes of which are Avestan tanūra and Pahlavi tanūr). As such, the term may not be of Semitic or Iranian origin at all, dating back as it does to periods before the migration of Aryan and Semitic people to the Iranian plateau and Mesopotamia(Bottéro 2004:47).

The fact that the main crop grown for use in bread baking in Georgia was wheat does not mean that no other crops were not also in evidence. In the western part of the country a crop called “ღომი”[Rom] [ghomi], belonging to the Monocotyledons culture, was used. The crop (that was similar to millet) was boiled and eaten instead of bread. When sweet corn came into use in the western part of the country it was used instead of Ghomi and the crop is now extinct. Nevertheless, this kind of bread is still named Ghomi in western Georgia, even if it is baked using fine grained cornflour and such bread is often called cornbread when described to visitors. Ghomi was also found in the Monocotyledons cultural period and remained in use until the beginning of twentieth century (personal communication Tskvitinidze, Tamar). Bread (ღომი) is a very important element of diet for Georgians; and, with just two exceptions, Khachapuri and Khinkali, it is eaten at every meal. It does not matter how many dishes there is on the table, if bread is missing, the meal is not considered to be complete.

![Fig2. Tone bread in the making. © Ulrica Söderlind](image-url)
Khachapuri and Khinkali

Khachapuri (ხაჩაპური) is a specialty of Georgian cuisine. There are different regional varieties, such as, adjarian khachapuri, imeritian khachapuri, aassetian khachapuri and Megrelian Khachapuri. The name is very often translated into English as cheese bread, but it is not bread at all. The dish consists of a mixture of dough made from a mixture of youghurt, wheatflour, baking soda, sugar, egg yolk and salt. The dough is prepared approximately three hours before using. The different varieties of the dish arise from the seasoning used – such as sour cream, garlic, and so on – and this is also regional specific. Even if the different varieties of khacapuri do not look alike, they are all made using this dough and are filled with cheese before they are baked in a pan on the stove or in the oven, and then coated with butter before being served (Georgian dishes, s.l, s.d:16-18,20,26). Khacapuri is a very popular dish and is often eaten as a snack between meals or as fast food, even though the dish is very filling.

Fig 3. Homemade Khachapuri in Zestaphonia. ©Ulrica Söderlind

Khinkali (ხინკალი [xinkali]) are also a typical Georgian specialty and, along with Khachapuri, are considered as a national dish. Khinkali are a kind of filled dumpling. Grey flour (such as rye flour), rather than white wheaten flour is used to make the dough, which consists of flour, salt and water. The dough is rolled out, round pieces are cut out and minced ham and pork are placed on top of them. The minced meat is flavoured with chopped unions, (in some cases also garlic) egg, pepper, and green herbs (such as parsley, coriander, cumin etc). The Khinkali with meat filling is the most common variety, although cheese, potato and mushrooms are also used for this purpose. The dough is wrapped around the filling and the dumpling is twisted around several times, the best made one is twisted around twelve times. The dumplings are put into boiling water and are served with butter and black pepper(Georgian dishes, s.l, s.d:30).

The dumplings are eaten by hand without the use of any cutlery. The dumpling is picked up by hand where the dough been twisted round. That part is harder then the rest and not as hot either as the remainder of the dumpling. The eating of khinkali is an art form since all of the meat juice stays inside the dumpling. It is not
easy for a foreigner to eat Khinkali while maintaining good table manner. As khinkali is a filling dish, it is very common to leave the part of the dumpling uneaten. Thus when a meal is finished it is possible to count how many khinkali each person had eaten. Wine is not a good choice to drink to khinkali, one of the few Georgian dishes where wine is not recommended.

It is presumed that Khinkali originated in China, where they were originally named ‘Jiao Tzu’. From there they spread to Russia (Pelmeni) and Central Asia (chuchvara). It is possible that the spread of the dish from China to Georgia started with the Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century.

Fig 4. Khinkali cooks are usually women and the Khinkali at the restaurants are made à la minute.
©Ulrica Söderlind

Supra and Tamada

It is not possible to talk about Georgias foodculture without mentioning the Supra and Tamada (they have shortly been presented earlier in the text). A supra is a traditional Georgian meal, often served in the evening and the word “supra” means tablecloth (Enwall & Söderlind 2009: 109), the term supra derives from the Arabic sufratun that means the cloth spread out on the floor for eating (Chatwin 2002: 181). At least 10 dishes are included in a supra and all the dishes are placed on the table all at once. Usually one finds the following dishes on a supra table; ajapsandali (fried eggplant with tomato and paprika), bazje (walnutsauce), chartjo (meatsoup), Khachapuri (see above), dzjondzjoli (pickled Caucasian nut, staphylea colchica), elardzji (porridge made of cornflour and sulgunicheece), ghomi (cornbread), gotji (whole roasted sucking-pig), lobio (brown beans in garlic sauce), mchaki/pchali (mixture of chopped spinach, leaves of beetroot or similar), mtsvadi (barbeque), mtsvanili (whole hers such as estragon, coriander, mint, dill, parsley dipped in salt), nigvziani (eggplant with walnuts), puri (bread), satsivi (turkey or chicken in walnut sauce), soko (marinated mushrooms), sulguni/suluguni (relatively salt cheese that can also be served fried), tjachochbili (chicken in tomato and onion sauce with herbs and t'gemali (sauce made from prunus divaricata). At the end of the supra Turkish coffee or tea is served along with fruits such as figs, quince in syrup (Enwall & Söderlind 2009: 109-
These dishes should be seen as the minimum of dishes at a supra, on many occasions the dishes are larger in numbers and a supra goes on for several hours.

In the beginning of the meal a tamada is elected, the toastmaster. In the Georgian context however tamada has a deeper meaning than toastmaster. Normally one of the oldest men among the guest around the table is chosen as the tamada, it is not uncommon that the host of the supra is elected. To be elected as tamada is a great honour, especially on large supers (Enwall & Söderlind 2009: 110, Chatwin 2002: 181). It takes years of training from childhood for a boy to be a good tamada as an adult man, in general men are chosen as tamada and that falls back to the tradition that earlier only men were presented at a supra. The years of training creates a tamada that is effective that can create innovations at each supra upon a background of a deeper theme, which all the guests have already heard many, many times, at many other occasions and spoken by other tamadas (Chatwin 2002:184).

The tamada starts or opens the supra with the first glass raised, joined by all the other guests at the tale and continues this process with successive statements at frequent intervals during the whole meal. The wine consumption varies between 2-6 liters of wine per person during the supra. At a supra there is no wine drinking taken place unless the tamada calls for a sadhregdzelo, the word means “for a long life”. Non-alcoholic beverages are served throughout the whole supra that can be drunk anytime (Chatwin 2002:184, Enwall & Söderlind 2009:110). It is worth noting here that the words tamada and sadhregdzelo can not be found in the dictionaries from the 17th or 18th centuries. In the beginning of the 19th century the two terms/words start to appear in the Georgian literature and in the end of the century it seems like that the supra culture is incorporated everywhere in the Georgian social life (Enwall & Söderlind 2009:112).

A Georgian toast is more like a blessing (dolotsva) then anything else and differs in that way from the toasting that takes place around a European feast table. There is a sacredness around the table, specially at a supra and wine is consider to be sacred (Chatwin 2002:184) and is seen as a heavenly beverage (personal communication, Donadze, Paata, Tbilisi, Georgia). The Georgian system of toasting is a ritual process, very familiar to all the guests and one which will not deviate according to personal whim. Even if there might be individual variations in the recognition of the context and guests, there can not be any changing in the process, it is impossible. One does not propose a toast if one is not tamada except under certain conditions and with permission of the tamada, one does not change the theme of the proposed toast (Chatwin 2002:185). Sometimes at large or grand supras the tamada has a helper, a so called merikipe. The merikipe serves the wine (personal communication, Donadze, Paata, Tbilisi, Georgia). The word keiipe derives from an ancient Persian word for joy. In the toast the tamada makes the word Gaumardjias is always present and it means “victory” (Chatwin 2002:185-186).

Depending on the size of the supra the numbers of toast divers in a range from five to twenty toasts or more (Chatwin 2002:185). The following toasts are usually celebrated at a supra; to acquaintances and friendship, to the guests, to relatives and friends health and well-being, to the guest families, to parents and the older generation, to the dead and the saints and a separate toast for the ones that have passed away before their time, to newborns and the ones waiting to be born, to the women around the table (here the women are addressed as the veiled ones), to love, to the mothers of the guests, to world peace, to the hostess and to tamada (Enwall & Söderlind 2009:111). The toast for the loved ones that have passed on is a very special toast and it is not uncommon that wine is poured into a piece of bread or bread is dipped in the wine during this toast. According the personal habit, the bread can be eaten or not eaten. Opinions differ among the
Georgians as to where this behavior comes from and what it means, some say it is the symbol of the blood and body of Christ while others say it comes from the mountain areas where wine is poured into the ground during this toast. In the cities the ground itself has been substituted by a piece of bread. It is not uncommon that the guests feel that they are directly sharing wine with the deceased person and the bread is the material form of him or her. Often this toast is celebrated with the men standing and the women seated (Chatwin 2002:187).

**Closing discussion**

This paper has dealt with two things: first with the factors that I think are very important for the choices for food and beverage that humans do in their daily lives and on feast days and second the basic of Georgian food culture.

The choice of food and beverage (gastronomy) is founded very early in the history of a nation (society) and its inhabitants. In short factors such as need, edibility, availability, human senses, philosophical thoughts, geographical and mental borders, economy, inheritance from childhood, ideology, social structures, social class, gender, utensils, experiences and sensations play a vital part in humans choices of food and beverage in the daily life and on feast days. A nation’s gastronomy consists also of phenomena such as diet, provisions, culinary art, fare, nourishment. The choices are therefore very complex and never static. It gets even more complicated due to the fact that the factors mentioned above not necessary have the same meaning for all inhabitants within the same geographical borders. However I think that all this factors combined constitute “the gastronomic man”.

Georgia has thanks to its geographical location always been a crossroad between the east and the west and has also therefore been object to many invasions by, for example, the Greeks, Persians, Mongols and the Ottomans, to name but a few. The invasions have left there footprints in among other things, the food and drinking culture in Georgia. One can find several cuisines in Georgia apart from the one the Georgians themselves consider to be their own. In the above text I have presented the staple foods of Georgians such as wine, bread, khachapuri, khinkali and the social event supra with its so important tamada. In the following I will discuss the factors that constitute “the gastronomic man” on the staples in Georgia’s food and drinking culture.

There is no doubt that the physiological need for food and nourishment is one of the driving forces for humans to see to it that there will be food and beverage for oneself and ones family or group. Even so, in order to provide that basic need humans do not eat or drink just anything that is at hand. Here come factors such as edibility and availability in. Just recently archaeologists proclaimed that the first clear evidence of organized feasting among early humans has been found. The findings come from a burial site in Israel and dates back approximately 12 thousand years (http://www.physorg.com/news202382957.html). Even if there is not a bounden of archaeological evidence for organized feasting the findings in Israel indicate that humans have done it for a long time. Considering Georgia’s long history it would not be at all surprising if similar findings will come to light at sites such as Dmanisi for example. This leads me to the early findings of cultivated wine pips in Georgia, found in the Shulaveri-Shomu Tepe culture and the pips dates to approximately 6625 B.C. These pips are not the oldest grape pips found, older ones have been found in modern Turkey, but they are pips from wild grapes and not cultivated grapes. There lays a very important difference. If one has cultivated grapes one can count on a more regular and steady harvest then if the grapes are wild. However to start to cultivate grapes and turn grapes into a crop among others in the
agriculture was a risky business. It took several years before the first harvest came if one started out with young stocks. In Georgia it seems like the reason for cultivating the grape was to make one and not to eat them. Table grapes appeared during the Bronze Age.

It is known from sources written in Antiquity that Greece took a great interest in the Kingdom of Colchis – the territory of modern western Georgia. As a result Greece colonized the coast of Colchis and established trading posts in Phasis (modern Poti), Gynenos, and Dioskuria (modern Sokhumi). Phasis and Dioskuria became splendid Greek cities dominated by mercantile oligarchies. These cities became very important trading centers along the Black Sea coast. Wine amphoras have been discovered near Poti (Gambrelidze, 1992:108) which show that there was a developed export and import wine trade. This shows that wine was an important and established product in the society’s economy during the Greek era; however it does indicate when wine became an important economic factor in society. However, just because earlier societies, such as the chalcolithic one, have not left any written records does not mean that wine was not an economic factor. So far, there have been just a few maritime excavations in Georgia along the Black Sea shore line, and if further excavations are allowed with a focus on locating ships and boats from earlier periods, then it might be possible to indicate when wine became an important economic factor in Georgia. I strongly believe that wine was an important economic factor long before antiquity and since Georgia most likely has been visited by people traveling along the waterways since the Stone Age, discoveries from that period and the Bronze Age would help to shed light on this matter.

In Georgia today there are around six hundred species of grapes (Chilashvili, 2004:198-123). The wine louse (Phylloxera vastatrix) that was so devastating for the wine yards in Europe in the late nineteenth century did not affect Georgia to the same extent. This means that even if Georgia has lost some of its species some ancient ones still exist. Smaller wine farmers still use the ancient techniques for the fermentation process of the grape juice. In the floors of the wine cellars the kvevris are placed into the floor up to its necks and the grape juice is poured into them and left to ferment under careful supervision from the wine farmer. The larger wine companies are using modern techniques that include metal tanks. In the production of wine making factors such as tradition and technical development go hand in hand.

One very interesting question which arises studying the wine cup in silver from Trialeti (Bronze Age) is whether it really is hops that are surrounding the God Mithra, and whether the God is drinking haoma. If this proves to be the case, it will indeed change what is known to date about the haoma cult – that is that the cult was closely connected to Mithra in the Persian Empire before the God was transformed into Mithras during antiquity. Many researchers have devoted much effort in trying to find out what was the main intoxicating ingredient of the haoma beverage. Some say that mushrooms (Amanita Muscaria) were used, while others are of the opinion that the original plant would have been a small bush that secreted a strong smell and had bitter leaves. The haoma beverage was a very intoxicating one and was also hallucinogenic. The plant that is in use today among the worshippers and followers of Zoroaster is a different plant – one which belongs to the Efediner (Peganum Harmala) family. The intoxicating and hallucinogenic effects of this plant are not as strong as its forerunner. If, indeed, the main ingredient in haoma was hops, there must have been some other ingredient in the beverage that gave the consumer the strong hallucinations. What that ingredient was remains to be seen.

Since Georgia is one of the earliest Christian countries in the world and due to the mission of Saint Nino and her dream where the Holy Virgin Mary told Nino to go back to Georgia and carry out her mission with a cross
made of wine stocks wine is closely connected to this to women and the Georgian Church symbol is the cross made out of wine stock, the so called Saint Nino’s cross. Tradition and theology as an ideology are very important factors for the wines role in the Georgian Christian way of life.

In Georgia bread seems to be as old as wine and wine drinking, findings of bread can be dated back to the chalcolitic era and in today’s Georgia the main crop for bread making is wheat. The Georgian word for wheat flour translated into English means in fact “bread flour”. A special bread, the “tone bread” has caught my interest since the oven differs from other ovens. This kind of ovens can also be found in modern Iran and Turkey and I have been able to trace this technique of bread making back to the Mesopotamians through the works of Bottéro, this kind of ovens are also found in Egyptian tombs from the time period of Ramses II. It is too early for me in my research to say where the origin of this kind of bread baking comes from but to me it seems unlikely that this special kind of oven would appear in different part of a relatively close geographical area without any contact between people and travelers, specially considering Georgia’s geographical crossroad location. How old this oven is in Georgia is not yet clear but it would not be a surprise if findings will came to light during archaeological excavations from early time periods in the country that will shed light on this matter. I do believe that the type of oven have been in use for a very long time in the country since it is a highly effective oven and I do believe that the oven type has been spread via travelers even if it is too early to say from where to where yet, that still remains to be dealt with.

*Khachapuri* is very interesting to study since it comes in different forms and shapes depending on where in Georgia it is served. The ingredients for the different kind of *khachapuri* are the same even if the outcome is different. As for now I can not answer the question of the *khachapuris* origin and why they have different appearances, the Georgians consider it to be one of their national dishes even if it comes in different shapes and forms. It is going to be interesting to see how far back in time the dish can be traced.

It is interesting that the Georgian’s consider *khinkali* as one of their national dishes since indicators exist that the origin of the dish comes from China. If one follows today’s diffusion of the dish and at the same time one studies maps of the movements of the Mongol war lord’s one can see that the dish under different names can be found on the same path as the Mongol war lord’s movements. In Georgia, one cannot find *Khinkali* in the western part. I believe that the dish never reached that region of the country due to the fact that the Mongolians never entered the forest which covers its surface. They did not know how to fight a battle in the forest region as they were unfamiliar with forest in their own homeland. There is a written source from the year 1658 that states the Khinkali was made of dry ham of animals, it does not say anything about salting or any other preparation of the meat besides drying (Sulxan-saba, 1993:423). It raises the question as to how, why and when the dried meat was transformed into the dish we know today as *Khinkali*. It seems logic for horsemen to have dried meat and bread with them in their saddle bags, easy to carry and easy to eat. What is considered to be the best *khinkali* today in Georgia can be found in mountain areas in eastern Georgia, and in past times that region was famous for it horsemen. This shall be seen as a working theory for now and further research is necessary before any firm conclusions in this regard can be reached. Regardless one can see once more that meetings between different kinds of people seem to be the key to the spread of the dish. Later on technology played an important part for the dish to transform from dried meat into the boiled meat dumplings we know to day as *khinkali*.

Even if the words *sadhregrdzeolo* and *tamada* do not appear in Georgian dictionaries and literature until the 19th century it does not mean that occasions like supras have been given earlier then that even if it was called something else. The finding of the bronze figurine dated to the first millennium B.C tells us otherwise.
It does not seem logic to create such a figurine if it did not have a great meaning to people in society. It indicates that the use of tamada goes way back in today’s Georgia history and that it is filled with a great deal of traditions when a supra takes place. The boys are in a way undergoing education from an early age in becoming a good tamada and that is something that is passed on from father to son over the generations. No wine drinking is taking place at a supra between the toasts made by the tamada. Since wine is considered to be a heavenly beverage the greatest respect is paid to the wine during a supra.

At a supra several dishes are served and many of them are already at the table before the guests are seated, nevertheless hot dishes are served during the supra and a supra table is carefully planned and laid out by the hostess. For each guest there are several cutlery, glasses, plates and napkins. There is always one larger plate and on top of that a smaller plate. When the hostess thinks that the smaller plate is becoming too dirty from the food eaten she replaces it with a new one, the plate will also be changed if the hostess thinks that different kinds of flavors from different dishes should not be mixed together. During a supra this small plate is changed a lot of times. Utensils at a supra is a very important factor for the guests’ comfort. At a supra one can feel and see the heart and soul of the Georgian people and it combines different kinds of ideologies where one can find elements from different regions of Georgia, first and foremost one finds the love the Georgian’s have for each other and their country.

Even if it seems like the origin of the word “wine” can be traced to the Georgian language and it is safe to say that the cradle of wine is in today’s Georgia it seems like other Georgian words derives from Persian and Arabic and that indicates that different kind of groups have come in contact with each other and most likely shared a meal together or at least broken bread with each other and then parted and the group belonging to the Georgian area took with them something from the other group that they liked and found pleasant. Of course it can also indicate that it comes from the invasion from Persia and Arabia and somehow have been forced upon the Georgians. I found that explanation a bit far fetched since something that has to do with food and beverage has been forced upon someone else do not survive long after the invaders have left the territory, either way it indicates contacts between different kind of people.

By choosing the staple foods of Georgia such as wine, bread, khachapuri, khinkali and the social event supra with its tamada I hope I have been able to point out how complex “the gastronomic man” in reality is, specially in a country like Georgia where people have met between the east and west most likely since time immemorial. Apart from the physiological need for nourishment factors such as availability, edibility, different kind of ideology, social structures, technology, economy, utensils, inheritance from childhood, geographical borders, human senses, experiences, sensations and traditions all are closely combined in a net that we all live in. Even if people find themselves in the same geographical area and belong to the same “group” of people it does not mean that this complex net is the same for each individual in the group. In my opinion it is this net that “the gastronomic man” constitutes of that makes it so interesting to study societies from a gastronomical point of view, especially complex countries such as Georgia.
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